BLASCO IBÁÑEZ VICENTE

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

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PART I

CHAPTER I
THE TRYST

(In the Garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire)

They were to have met in the garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire at five o'clock in the afternoon, but Julio Desnoyers with the impatience of a lover who hopes to advance the moment of meeting by presenting himself before the appointed time, arrived an half hour earlier. The change of the seasons was at this time greatly confused in his mind, and evidently demanded some readjustment.

Five months had passed since their last interview in this square had afforded the wandering lovers the refuge of a damp, depressing calmness near a boulevard of continual movement close to a great railroad station. The hour of the appointment was always five and Julio was accustomed to see his beloved approaching by the reflection of the recently lit street lamps, her figure enveloped in furs, and holding her muff before her face as if it were a half-mask. Her sweet voice, greeting him, had breathed forth a cloud of vapor, white and tenuous, congealed by the cold. After various hesitating interviews, they had abandoned the garden. Their love had acquired the majestic importance of acknowledged fact, and from five to seven had taken refuge in the fifth floor of the rue de la Pompe where Julio had an artist's studio. The curtains well drawn over the double glass windows, the cosy hearth-fire sending forth its ruddy flame as the only light of the room, the monotonous song of the samovar bubbling near the cups of tea—all the seclusion of life isolated by an idolizing love—had dulled their perceptions to the fact that the afternoons were growing longer, that outside the sun was shining later and later into the pearl-covered depths of the clouds, and that a timid and pallid Spring was beginning to show its green finger tips in the buds of the branches suffering the last nips of Winter—that wild, black boar who so often turned on his tracks.

Then Julio had made his trip to Buenos Aires, encountering in the other hemisphere the last smile of Autumn and the first icy winds from the pampas. And just as his mind was becoming reconciled to the fact that for him Winter was an eternal season—since it always came to meet him in his change of domicile from one extreme of the planet to the other—lo, Summer was unexpectedly confronting him in this dreary garden!

A swarm of children was racing and screaming through the short avenues around the monument. On entering the place, the first thing that Julio encountered was a hoop which came rolling toward his legs, trundled by a childish hand. Then he stumbled over a ball. Around the chestnut trees was gathering the usual warm-weather crowd, seeking the blue shade perforated with points of light. Many nurse-maids from the neighboring houses were working and chattering here, following with indifferent glances the rough games of the children confided to their care. Near them were the men who had brought their papers down into the garden under the impression that they could read them in the midst of peaceful groves. All of the benches were full. A few women were occupying camp stools with that feeling of superiority which ownership always confers. The iron chairs, "pay-seats," were serving as resting places for various suburban dames, loaded down with packages, who were waiting for straggling members of their families in order to take the train in the Gare Saint Lazare. . . .

And Julio, in his special delivery letter, had proposed meeting in this place, supposing that it would be as little frequented as in former times. She, too, with the same thoughtlessness, had in her reply, set the usual hour of five o'clock, believing that after passing a few minutes in the Printemps or the Galeries on the pretext of shopping, she would be able to slip over to the unfrequented garden without risk of being seen by any of her numerous acquaintances.

Desnoyers was enjoying an almost forgotten sensation, that of strolling through vast spaces, crushing as he walked the grains of sand under his feet. For the past twenty days his rovings had been upon planks, following with the automatic precision of a riding school the oval promenade on the deck of a ship. His feet accustomed to insecure ground, still were keeping on terra firma a certain sensation of elastic unsteadiness. His goings and comings were not awakening the curiosity of the people seated in the open, for a common preoccupation seemed to be monopolizing all the men and women. The groups were exchanging impressions. Those who happened to have a paper in their hands, saw their neighbors approaching them with a smile of interrogation. There had suddenly disappeared that distrust and suspicion which impels the inhabitants of large cities mutually to ignore one another, taking each other's measure at a glance as though they were enemies.

"They are talking about the war," said Desnoyers to himself. "At this time, all Paris speaks of nothing but the possibility of war."

Outside of the garden he could see also the same anxiety which was making those around him so fraternal and sociable. The venders of newspapers were passing through the boulevard crying the evening editions, their furious speed repeatedly slackened by the eager hands of the passers-by contending for the papers. Every reader was instantly surrounded by a group begging for news or trying to decipher over his shoulder the great headlines at the top of the sheet. In the rue des Mathurins, on the other side of the square, a circle of workmen under the awning of a tavern were listening to the comments of a friend who accompanied his words with oratorical gestures and wavings of the paper. The traffic in the streets, the general bustle of the city was the same as in other days, but it seemed to Julio that the vehicles were whirling past more rapidly, that there was a feverish agitation in the air and that people were speaking and smiling in a different way. The women of the garden were looking even at him as if they had seen him in former days. He was able to approach them and begin a conversation without experiencing the slightest strangeness.

"They are talking of the war," he said again but with the commiseration of a superior intelligence which foresees the future and feels above the impressions of the vulgar crowd.

He knew exactly what course he was going to follow. He had disembarked at ten o'clock the night before, and as it was not yet twenty-four hours since he had touched land, his mentality was still that of a man who comes from afar, across oceanic immensities, from boundless horizons, and is surprised at finding himself in touch with the preoccupations which govern human communities. After disembarking he had spent two hours in a cafe in Boulogne, listlessly watching the middle-class families who passed their time in the monotonous placidity of a life without dangers. Then the special train for the passengers from South America had brought him to Paris, leaving him at four in the morning on a platform of the Gare du Nord in the embrace of Pepe Argensola, the young Spaniard whom he sometimes called "my secretary" or "my valet" because it was difficult to define exactly the relationship between them. In reality, he was a mixture of friend and parasite, the poor comrade, complacent and capable in his companionship with a rich youth on bad terms with his family, sharing with him the ups and downs of fortune, picking up the crumbs of prosperous days, or inventing expedients to keep up appearances in the hours of poverty.

"What about the war?" Argensola had asked him before inquiring about the result of his trip. "You have come a long ways and should know much."

Soon he was sound asleep in his dear old bed while his "secretary" was pacing up and down the studio talking of Servia, Russia and the Kaiser. This youth, too, skeptical as he generally was about everything not connected with his own interests, appeared infected by the general excitement.

When Desnoyers awoke he found her note awaiting him, setting their meeting at five that afternoon and also containing a few words about the threatened danger which was claiming the attention of all Paris. Upon going out in search of lunch the concierge, on the pretext of welcoming him back, had asked him the war news. And in the restaurant, the cafe and the street, always war . . . the possibility of war with Germany. . . .

Julio was an optimist. What did all this restlessness signify to a man who had just been living more than twenty days among Germans, crossing the Atlantic under the flag of the Empire?

He had sailed from Buenos Aires in a steamer of the Hamburg line, the Koenig Frederic August. The world was in blessed tranquillity when the boat left port. Only the whites and half-breeds of Mexico were exterminating each other in conflicts in order that nobody might believe that man is an animal degenerated by peace. On the rest of the planet, the people were displaying unusual prudence. Even aboard the transatlantic liner, the little world of passengers of most diverse nationalities appeared a fragment of future society implanted by way of experiment in modern times —a sketch of the hereafter, without frontiers or race antagonisms.

One morning the ship band which every Sunday had sounded the Choral of Luther, awoke those sleeping in the first-class cabins with the most unheard-of serenade. Desnoyers rubbed his eyes believing himself under the hallucinations of a dream. The German horns were playing the Marseillaise through the corridors and decks. The steward, smiling at his astonishment, said, "The fourteenth of July!" On the German steamers they celebrate as their own the great festivals of all the nations represented by their cargo and passengers. Their captains are careful to observe scrupulously the rites of this religion of the flag and its historic commemoration. The most insignificant republic saw the ship decked in its honor, affording one more diversion to help combat the monotony of the voyage and further the lofty ends of the Germanic propaganda. For the first time the great festival of France was being celebrated on a German vessel, and whilst the musicians continued escorting a racy Marseillaise in double quick time through the different floors, the morning groups were commenting on the event.

"What finesse!" exclaimed the South American ladies. "These Germans are not so phlegmatic as they seem. It is an attention . . . something very distinguished. . . . And is it possible that some still believe that they and the French might come to blows?"

The very few Frenchmen who were travelling on the steamer found themselves admired as though they had increased immeasurably in public esteem. There were only three;—an old jeweller who had been visiting his branch shops in America, and two demi-mondaines from the rue de la Paix, the most timid and well-behaved persons aboard, vestals with bright eyes and disdainful noses who held themselves stiffly aloof in this uncongenial atmosphere.

At night there was a gala banquet in the dining room at the end of which the French flag and that of the Empire formed a flaunting, conspicuous drapery. All the German passengers were in dress suits, and their wives were wearing low-necked gowns. The uniforms of the attendants were as resplendent as on a day of a grand review.

During dessert the tapping of a knife upon a glass reduced the table to sudden silence. The Commandant was going to speak. And this brave mariner who united to his nautical functions the obligation of making harangues at banquets and opening the dance with the lady of most importance, began unrolling a string of words like the noise of clappers between long intervals of silence. Desnoyers knew a little German as a souvenir of a visit to some relatives in Berlin, and so was able to catch a few words. The Commandant was repeating every few minutes "peace" and "friends." A table neighbor, a commercial commissioner, offered his services as interpreter to Julio, with that obsequiousness which lives on advertisement.

"The Commandant asks God to maintain peace between Germany and France and hopes that the two peoples will become increasingly friendly."

Another orator arose at the same table. He was the most influential of the German passengers, a rich manufacturer from Dusseldorf who had just been visiting his agents in America. He was never mentioned by name. He bore the title of Commercial Counsellor, and among his countrymen was always Herr Comerzienrath and his wife was entitled Frau Rath. The Counsellor's Lady, much younger than her important husband, had from the first attracted the attention of Desnoyers. She, too, had made an exception in favor of this young Argentinian, abdicating her title from their first conversation. "Call me Bertha," she said as condescendingly as a duchess of Versailles might have spoken to a handsome abbot seated at her feet. Her husband, also protested upon hearing Desnoyers call him "Counsellor," like his compatriots.

"My friends," he said, "call me 'Captain.' I command a company of the Landsturm." And the air with which the manufacturer accompanied these words, revealed the melancholy of an unappreciated man scorning the honors he has in order to think only of those he does not possess.

While he was delivering his discourse, Julio was examining his small head and thick neck which gave him a certain resemblance to a bull dog. In imagination he saw the high and oppressive collar of a uniform making a double roll of fat above its stiff edge. The waxed, upright moustaches were bristling aggressively. His voice was sharp and dry as though he were shaking out his words. . . . Thus the Emperor would utter his harangues, so the martial burgher, with instinctive imitation, was contracting his left arm, supporting his hand upon the hilt of an invisible sword.

In spite of his fierce and oratorical gesture of command, all the listening Germans laughed uproariously at his first words, like men who knew how to appreciate the sacrifice of a Herr Comerzienrath when he deigns to divert a festivity.

"He is saying very witty things about the French," volunteered the interpreter in a low voice, "but they are not offensive."

Julio had guessed as much upon hearing repeatedly the word Franzosen. He almost understood what the orator was saying—"Franzosen—great children, light-hearted, amusing, improvident. The things that they might do together if they would only forget past grudges!" The attentive Germans were no longer laughing. The Counsellor was laying aside his irony, that grandiloquent, crushing irony, weighing many tons, as enormous as a ship. Then he began unrolling the serious part of his harangue, so that he himself, was also greatly affected.

"He says, sir," reported Julio's neighbor, "that he wishes France to become a very great nation so that some day we may march together against other enemies . . . against OTHERS!"

And he winked one eye, smiling maliciously with that smile of common intelligence which this allusion to the mysterious enemy always awakened.

Finally the Captain-Counsellor raised his glass in a toast to France. "Hoch!" he yelled as though he were commanding an evolution of his soldierly Reserves. Three times he sounded the cry and all the German contingent springing to their feet, responded with a lusty Hoch while the band in the corridor blared forth the Marseillaise.

Desnoyers was greatly moved. Thrills of enthusiasm were coursing up and down his spine. His eyes became so moist that, when drinking his champagne, he almost believed that he had swallowed some tears. He bore a French name. He had French blood in his veins, and this that the gringoes were doing—although generally they seemed to him ridiculous and ordinary—was really worth acknowledging. The subjects of the Kaiser celebrating the great date of the Revolution! He believed that he was witnessing a great historic event.

"Very well done!" he said to the other South Americans at the near tables. "We must admit that they have done the handsome thing."

Then with the vehemence of his twenty-seven years, he accosted the jeweller in the passage way, reproaching him for his silence. He was the only French citizen aboard. He should have made a few words of acknowledgment. The fiesta was ending awkwardly through his fault.

"And why have you not spoken as a son of France?" retorted the jeweller.

"I am an Argentinian citizen," replied Julio.

And he left the older man believing that he ought to have spoken and making explanations to those around him. It was a very dangerous thing, he protested, to meddle in diplomatic affairs. Furthermore, he had not instructions from his government. And for a few hours he believed that he had been on the point of playing a great role in history.

Desnoyers passed the rest of the evening in the smoking room attracted thither by the presence of the Counsellor's Lady. The Captain of the Landsturm, sticking a preposterous cigar between his moustachios, was playing poker with his countrymen ranking next to him in dignity and riches. His wife stayed beside him most of the time, watching the goings and comings of the stewards carrying great bocks, without daring to share in this tremendous consumption of beer. Her special preoccupation was to keep vacant near her a seat which Desnoyers might occupy. She considered him the most distinguished man on board because he was accustomed to taking champagne with all his meals. He was of medium height, a decided brunette, with a small foot, which obliged her to tuck hers under her skirts, and a triangular face under two masses of hair, straight, black and glossy as lacquer, the very opposite of the type of men about her. Besides, he was living in Paris, in the city which she had never seen after numerous trips in both hemispheres.

"Oh, Paris! Paris!" she sighed, opening her eyes and pursing her lips in order to express her admiration when she was speaking alone to the Argentinian. "How I should love to go there!"

And in order that he might feel free to tell her things about Paris, she permitted herself certain confidences about the pleasures of Berlin, but with a blushing modesty, admitting in advance that in the world there was more—much more—that she wished to become acquainted with.

While pacing around the Chapelle Expiatoire, Julio recalled with a certain remorse the wife of Counsellor Erckmann. He who had made the trip to America for a woman's sake, in order to collect money and marry her! Then he immediately began making excuses for his conduct. Nobody was going to know. Furthermore he did not pretend to be an ascetic, and Bertha Erckmann was certainly a tempting adventure in mid ocean. Upon recalling her, his imagination always saw a race horse—large, spare, roan colored, and with a long stride. She was an up-to-date German who admitted no defect in her country except the excessive weight of its women, combating in her person this national menace with every known system of dieting. For her every meal was a species of torment, and the procession of bocks in the smoking room a tantalizing agony. The slenderness achieved and maintained by will power only made more prominent the size of her frame, the powerful skeleton with heavy jaws and large teeth, strong and dazzling, which perhaps suggested Desnoyers' disrespectful comparison. "She is thin, but enormous, nevertheless!" was always his conclusion.

But then, he considered her, notwithstanding, the most distinguished woman on board—distinguished for the sea—elegant in the style of Munich, with clothes of indescribable colors that suggested Persian art and the vignettes of mediaeval manuscripts. The husband admired Bertha's elegance, lamenting her childlessness in secret, almost as though it were a crime of high treason. Germany was magnificent because of the fertility of its women. The Kaiser, with his artistic hyperbole, had proclaimed that the true German beauty should have a waist measure of at least a yard and a half.

When Desnoyers entered into the smoking room in order to take the seat which Bertha had reserved for him, her husband and his wealthy hangers-on had their pack of cards lying idle upon the green felt. Herr Rath was continuing his discourse and his listeners, taking their cigars from their mouths, were emitting grunts of approbation. The arrival of Julio provoked a general smile of amiability. Here was France coming to fraternize with them. They knew that his father was French, and that fact made him as welcome as though he came in direct line from the palace of the Quai d'Orsay, representing the highest diplomacy of the Republic. The craze for proselyting made them all promptly concede to him unlimited importance.

"We," continued the Counsellor looking fixedly at Desnoyers as if he were expecting a solemn declaration from him, "we wish to live on good terms with France."

The youth nodded his head so as not to appear inattentive. It appeared to him a very good thing that these peoples should not be enemies, and as far as he was concerned, they might affirm this relationship as often as they wished: the only thing that was interesting him just at that time was a certain knee that was seeking his under the table, transmitting its gentle warmth through a double curtain of silk.

"But France," complained the manufacturer, "is most unresponsive towards us. For many years past, our Emperor has been holding out his hand with noble loyalty, but she pretends not to see it. . . . That, you must admit, is not as it should be."

Just here Desnoyers believed that he ought to say something in order that the spokesman might not divine his more engrossing occupation.

"Perhaps you are not doing enough. If, first of all, you would return that which you took away from France!" . . .

Stupefied silence followed this remark, as if the alarm signal had sounded through the boat. Some of those who were about putting their cigars in their mouths, remained with hands immovable within two inches of their lips, their eyes almost popping out of their heads. But the Captain of the Landsturm was there to formulate their mute protest.

"Return!" he said in a voice almost extinguished by the sudden swelling of his neck. "We have nothing to return, for we have taken nothing. That which we possess, we acquire by our heroism."

The hidden knee with its agreeable friction made itself more insinuating, as though counselling the youth to greater prudence.

"Do not say such things," breathed Bertha, "thus only the republicans, corrupted by Paris, talk. A youth so distinguished who has been in Berlin, and has relatives in Germany!" . . .

But Desnoyers felt a hereditary impulse of aggressiveness before each of her husband's statements, enunciated in haughty tones, and responded coldly:—

"It is as if I should take your watch and then propose that we should be friends, forgetting the occurrence. Although you might forget, the first thing for me to do would be to return the watch."

Counsellor Erckmann wished to retort with so many things at once that he stuttered horribly, leaping from one idea to the other. To compare the reconquest of Alsace to a robbery. A German country! The race . . . the language . . . the history! . . .

"But when did they announce their wish to be German?" asked the youth without losing his calmness. "When have you consulted their opinion?"

The Counsellor hesitated, not knowing whether to argue with this insolent fellow or crush him with his scorn.

"Young man, you do not know what you are talking about," he finally blustered with withering contempt. "You are an Argentinian and do not understand the affairs of Europe."

And the others agreed, suddenly repudiating the citizenship which they had attributed to him a little while before. The Counsellor, with military rudeness, brusquely turned his back upon him, and taking up the pack, distributed the cards. The game was renewed. Desnoyers, seeing himself isolated by the scornful silence, felt greatly tempted to break up the playing by violence; but the hidden knee continued counselling self-control, and an invisible hand had sought his right, pressing it sweetly. That was enough to make him recover his serenity. The Counsellor's Lady seemed to be absorbed in the progress of the game. He also looked on, a malignant smile contracting slightly the lines of his mouth as he was mentally ejaculating by way of consolation, "Captain, Captain! . . . You little know what is awaiting you!"

On terra firma, he would never again have approached these men; but life on a transatlantic liner, with its inevitable promiscuousness, obliges forgetfulness. The following day the Counsellor and his friends came in search of him, flattering his sensibilities by erasing every irritating memory.

He was a distinguished youth belonging to a wealthy family, and all of them had shops and business in his country. The only thing was that he should be careful not to mention his French origin. He was an Argentinian; and thereupon, the entire chorus interested itself in the grandeur of his country and all the nations of South America where they had agencies or investments—exaggerating its importance as though its petty republics were great powers, commenting with gravity upon the deeds and words of its political leaders and giving him to understand that in Germany there was no one who was not concerned about the future of South America, predicting for all its divisions most glorious prosperity —a reflex of the Empire, always, provided, of course, that they kept under Germanic influence.

In spite of these flatteries, Desnoyers was no longer presenting himself with his former assiduity at the hour of poker. The Counsellor's wife was retiring to her stateroom earlier than usual—their approach to the Equator inducing such an irresistible desire for sleep, that she had to abandon her husband to his card playing. Julio also had mysterious occupations which prevented his appearance on deck until after midnight. With the precipitation of a man who desires to be seen in order to avoid suspicion, he was accustomed to enter the smoking room talking loudly as he seated himself near the husband and his boon companions.

The game had ended, and an orgy of beer and fat cigars from Hamburg was celebrating the success of the winners. It was the hour of Teutonic expansion, of intimacy among men, of heavy, sluggish jokes, of off-color stories. The Counsellor was presiding with much majesty over the diableries of his chums, prudent business men from the Hanseatic ports who had big accounts in the Deutsche Bank or were shopkeepers installed in the republic of the La Plata, with an innumerable family. He was a warrior, a captain, and on applauding every heavy jest with a laugh that distended his fat neck, he fancied that he was among his comrades at arms.

In honor of the South Americans who, tired of pacing the deck, had dropped in to hear what the gringoes were saying, they were turning into Spanish the witticisms and licentious anecdotes awakened in the memory by a superabundance of beer. Julio was marvelling at the ready laugh of all these men. While the foreigners were remaining unmoved, they would break forth into loud horse-laughs throwing themselves back in their seats. And when the German audience was growing cold, the story-teller would resort to an infallible expedient to remedy his lack of success:—

"They told this yarn to the Kaiser, and when the Kaiser heard it he laughed heartily."

It was not necessary to say more. They all laughed then. Ha, ha, ha! with a spontaneous roar but a short one, a laugh in three blows, since to prolong it, might be interpreted as a lack of respect to His Majesty.

As they neared Europe, a batch of news came to meet the boat. The employees in the wireless telegraphy office were working incessantly. One night, on entering the smoking room, Desnoyers saw the German notables gesticulating with animated countenances. They were no longer drinking beer. They had had bottles of champagne uncorked, and the Counsellor's Lady, much impressed, had not retired to her stateroom. Captain Erckmann, spying the young Argentinian, offered him a glass.

"It is war," he shouted with enthusiasm. "War at last. . . . The hour has come!"

Desnoyers made a gesture of astonishment. War! . . . What war? . . . Like all the others, he had read on the news bulletin outside a radiogram stating that the Austrian government had just sent an ultimatum to Servia; but it made not the slightest impression on him, for he was not at all interested in the Balkan affairs. Those were but the quarrels of a miserable little nation monopolizing the attention of the world, distracting it from more worthwhile matters. How could this event concern the martial Counsellor? The two nations would soon come to an understanding. Diplomacy sometimes amounted to something.

"No," insisted the German ferociously. "It is war, blessed war. Russia will sustain Servia, and we will support our ally. . . . What will France do? Do you know what France will do?" . . .

Julio shrugged his shoulders testily as though asking to be left out of all international discussions.

"It is war," asserted the Counsellor, "the preventive war that we need. Russia is growing too fast, and is preparing to fight us. Four years more of peace and she will have finished her strategic railroads, and her military power, united to that of her allies, will be worth as much as ours. It is better to strike a powerful blow now. It is necessary to take advantage of this opportunity. . . . War. Preventive war!"

All his clan were listening in silence. Some did not appear to feel the contagion of his enthusiasm. War! . . . In imagination they saw their business paralyzed, their agencies bankrupt, the banks cutting down credit . . . a catastrophe more frightful to them than the slaughters of battles. But they applauded with nods and grunts all of Erckmann's ferocious demonstrations. He was a Herr Rath, and an officer besides. He must be in the secrets of the destiny of his country, and that was enough to make them drink silently to the success of the war.

Julio thought that the Counsellor and his admirers must be drunk. "Look here, Captain," he said in a conciliatory tone, "what you say lacks logic. How could war possibly be acceptable to industrial Germany? Every moment its business is increasing, every month it conquers a new market and every year its commercial balance soars upward in unheard of proportions. Sixty years ago, it had to man its boats with Berlin hack drivers arrested by the police. Now its commercial fleets and war vessels cross all oceans, and there is no port where the German merchant marine does not occupy the greatest part of the docks. It would only be necessary to continue living in this way, to put yourselves beyond the exigencies of war! Twenty years more of peace, and the Germans would be lords of the world's commerce, conquering England, the former mistress of the seas, in a bloodless struggle. And are they going to risk all this—like a gambler who stakes his entire fortune on a single card—in a struggle that might result unfavorably?" . . .

"No, war," insisted the Counsellor furiously, "preventive war. We live surrounded by our enemies, and this state of things cannot go on. It is best to end it at once. Either they or we! Germany feels herself strong enough to challenge the world. We've got to put an end to this Russian menace! And if France doesn't keep herself quiet, so much the worse for her! . . . And if anyone else . . . ANYONE dares to come in against us, so much the worse for him! When I set up a new machine in my shops, it is to make it produce unceasingly. We possess the finest army in the world, and it is necessary to give it exercise that it may not rust out."

He then continued with heavy emphasis, "They have put a band of iron around us in order to throttle us. But Germany has a strong chest and has only to expand in order to burst its bands. We must awake before they manacle us in our sleep. Woe to those who then oppose us! . . ."

Desnoyers felt obliged to reply to this arrogance. He had never seen the iron circle of which the Germans were complaining. The nations were merely unwilling to continue living, unsuspecting and inactive, before boundless German ambition. They were simply preparing to defend themselves against an almost certain attack. They wished to maintain their dignity, repeatedly violated under most absurd pretexts.

"I wonder if it is not the others," he concluded, "who are obliged to defend themselves because you represent a menace to the world!"

An invisible hand sought his under the table, as it had some nights before, to recommend prudence; but now he clasped it forcibly with the authority of a right acquired.

"Oh, sir!" sighed the sweet Bertha, "to talk like that, a youth so distinguished who has . . ."

She was not able to finish, for her husband interrupted. They were no longer in American waters, and the Counsellor expressed himself with the rudeness of a master of his house.

"I have the honor to inform you, young man," he said, imitating the cutting coldness of the diplomats, "that you are merely a South American and know nothing of the affairs of Europe."

He did not call him an "Indian," but Julio heard the implication as though he had used the word itself. Ah, if that hidden handclasp had not held him with its sentimental thrills! . . . But this contact

kept him calm and even made him smile. “Thanks, Captain,” he said to himself. “It is the least you can do to get even with me!”

Here his relations with the German and his clientele came to an end. The merchants, as they approached nearer and nearer to their native land, began casting off that servile desire of ingratiating themselves which they had assumed in all their trips to the new world. They now had more important things to occupy them. The telegraphic service was working without cessation. The Commandant of the vessel was conferring in his apartment with the Counsellor as his compatriot of most importance. His friends were hunting out the most obscure places in order to talk confidentially with one another. Even Bertha commenced to avoid Desnoyers. She was still smiling distantly at him, but that smile was more of a souvenir than a reality.

Between Lisbon and the coast of England, Julio spoke with her husband for the last time. Every morning was appearing on the bulletin board the alarming news transmitted by radiograph. The Empire was arming itself against its enemies. God would punish them, making all manner of troubles fall upon them. Desnoyers was motionless with astonishment before the last piece of news —“Three hundred thousand revolutionists are now besieging Paris. The suburbs are beginning to burn. The horrors of the Commune have broken out again.”

“My, but these Germans have gone mad!” exclaimed the disgusted youth to the curious group surrounding the radio-sheet. “We are going to lose the little sense that we have left! . . . What revolutionists are they talking about? How could a revolution break out in Paris if the men of the government are not reactionary?”

A gruff voice sounded behind him, rude, authoritative, as if trying to banish the doubts of the audience. It was the Herr Comerzienrath who was speaking.

“Young man, these notices are sent us by the first agencies of Germany . . . and Germany never lies.”

After this affirmation, he turned his back upon them and they saw him no more.

On the following morning, the last day of the voyage. Desnoyers’ steward awoke him in great excitement. “Herr, come up on deck! a most beautiful spectacle!”

The sea was veiled by the fog, but behind its hazy curtains could be distinguished some silhouettes like islands with great towers and sharp, pointed minarets. The islands were advancing over the oily waters slowly and majestically, with impressive dignity. Julio counted eighteen. They appeared to fill the ocean. It was the Channel Fleet which had just left the English coast by Government order, sailing around simply to show its strength. Seeing this procession of dreadnoughts for the first time, Desnoyers was reminded of a flock of marine monsters, and gained a better idea of the British power. The German ship passed among them, shrinking, humiliated, quickening its speed. “One might suppose,” mused the youth, “that she had an uneasy conscience and wished to scud to safety.” A South American passenger near him was jesting with one of the Germans, “What if they have already declared war! . . . What if they should make us prisoners!”

After midday, they entered Southampton roads. The Frederic August hurried to get away as soon as possible, and transacted business with dizzying celerity. The cargo of passengers and baggage was enormous. Two launches approached the transatlantic and discharged an avalanche of Germans residents in England who invaded the decks with the joy of those who tread friendly soil, desiring to see Hamburg as soon as possible. Then the boat sailed through the Channel with a speed most unusual in these places.

The people, leaning on the railing, were commenting on the extraordinary encounters in this marine boulevard, usually frequented by ships of peace. Certain smoke lines on the horizon were from the French squadron carrying President Poincare who was returning from Russia. The European alarm had interrupted his trip. Then they saw more English vessels patrolling the coast line like aggressive and vigilant dogs. Two North American battleships could be distinguished by their mast-heads in the form of baskets. Then a Russian battleship, white and glistening, passed at full steam

on its way to the Baltic. “Bad!” said the South American passengers regretfully. “Very bad! It looks this time as if it were going to be serious!” and they glanced uneasily at the neighboring coasts on both sides. Although they presented the usual appearance, behind them, perhaps, a new period of history was in the making.

The transatlantic was due at Boulogne at midnight where it was supposed to wait until daybreak to discharge its passengers comfortably. It arrived, nevertheless, at ten, dropped anchor outside the harbor, and the Commandant gave orders that the disembarkation should take place in less than an hour. For this reason they had quickened their speed, consuming a vast amount of extra coal. It was necessary to get away as soon as possible, seeking the refuge of Hamburg. The radiographic apparatus had evidently been working to some purpose.

By the glare of the bluish searchlights which were spreading a livid clearness over the sea, began the unloading of passengers and baggage for Paris, from the transatlantic into the tenders. “Hurry! Hurry!” The seamen were pushing forward the ladies of slow step who were recounting their valises, believing that they had lost some. The stewards loaded themselves up with babies as though they were bundles. The general precipitation dissipated the usual exaggerated and oily Teutonic amiability. “They are regular bootlickers,” thought Desnoyers. “They believe that their hour of triumph has come, and do not think it necessary to pretend any longer.” . . .

He was soon in a launch that was bobbing up and down on the waves near the black and immovable hulk of the great liner, dotted with many circles of light and filled with people waving handkerchiefs. Julio recognized Bertha who was waving her hand without seeing him, without knowing in which tender he was, but feeling obliged to show her gratefulness for the sweet memories that now were being lost in the mystery of the sea and the night. “Adieu, Frau Rath!”

The distance between the departing transatlantic and the lighters was widening. As though it had been awaiting this moment with impunity, a stentorian voice on the upper deck shouted with a noisy guffaw, “See you later! Soon we shall meet you in Paris!” And the marine band, the very same band that three days before had astonished Desnoyers with its unexpected Marseillaise, burst forth into a military march of the time of Frederick the Great—a march of grenadiers with an accompaniment of trumpets.

That had been the night before. Although twenty-four hours had not yet passed by, Desnoyers was already considering it as a distant event of shadowy reality. His thoughts, always disposed to take the opposite side, did not share in the general alarm. The insolence of the Counsellor now appeared to him but the boastings of a burgher turned into a soldier. The disquietude of the people of Paris, was but the nervous agitation of a city which lived placidly and became alarmed at the first hint of danger to its comfort. So many times they had spoken of an immediate war, always settling things peacefully at the last moment! . . . Furthermore he did not want war to come because it would upset all his plans for the future; and the man accepted as logical and reasonable everything that suited his selfishness, placing it above reality.

“No, there will not be war,” he repeated as he continued pacing up and down the garden. “These people are beside themselves. How could a war possibly break out in these days?” . . .

And after disposing of his doubts, which certainly would in a short time come up again, he thought of the joy of the moment, consulting his watch. Five o’clock! She might come now at any minute! He thought that he recognized her afar off in a lady who was passing through the grating by the rue Pasquier. She seemed to him a little different, but it occurred to him that possibly the Summer fashions might have altered her appearance. But soon he saw that he had made a mistake. She was not alone, another lady was with her. They were perhaps English or North American women who worshipped the memory of Marie Antoinette and wished to visit the Chapelle Expiatoire, the old tomb of the executed queen. Julio watched them as they climbed the flights of steps and crossed the interior patio in which were interred the eight hundred Swiss soldiers killed in the attack of the Tenth of August, with other victims of revolutionary fury.

Disgusted at his error, he continued his tramp. His ill humor made the monument with which the Bourbon restoration had adorned the old cemetery of the Madeleine, appear uglier than ever to him. Time was passing, but she did not come. Every time that he turned, he looked hungrily at the entrances of the garden. And then it happened as in all their meetings. She suddenly appeared as if she had fallen from the sky or risen up from the ground, like an apparition. A cough, a slight rustling of footsteps, and as he turned, Julio almost collided with her.

"Marguerite! Oh, Marguerite!" . . .

It was she, and yet he was slow to recognize her. He felt a certain strangeness in seeing in full reality the countenance which had occupied his imagination for three months, each time more spirituelle and shadowy with the idealism of absence. But his doubts were of short duration. Then it seemed as though time and space were eliminated, that he had not made any voyage, and but a few hours had intervened since their last interview.

Marguerite divined the expansion which might follow Julio's exclamations, the vehement hand-clasp, perhaps something more, so she kept herself calm and serene.

"No; not here," she said with a grimace of repugnance. "What a ridiculous idea for us to have met here!"

They were about to seat themselves on the iron chairs, in the shadow of some shrubbery, when she rose suddenly. Those who were passing along the boulevard might see them by merely casting their eyes toward the garden. At this time, many of her friends might be passing through the neighborhood because of its proximity to the big shops. . . . They, therefore, sought refuge at a corner of the monument, placing themselves between it and the rue des Mathurins. Desnoyers brought two chairs near the hedge, so that when seated they were invisible to those passing on the other side of the railing. But this was not solitude. A few steps away, a fat, nearsighted man was reading his paper, and a group of women were chatting and embroidering. A woman with a red wig and two dogs—some housekeeper who had come down into the garden in order to give her pets an airing—passed several times near the amorous pair, smiling discreetly.

"How annoying!" groaned Marguerite. "Why did we ever come to this place!"

The two scrutinized each other carefully, wishing to see exactly what transformation Time had wrought.

"You are darker than ever," she said. "You look like a man of the sea."

Julio was finding her even lovelier than before, and felt sure that possessing her was well worth all the contrarieties which had brought about his trip to South America. She was taller than he, with an elegantly proportioned slenderness. "She has the musical step," Desnoyers had told himself, when seeing her in his imagination; and now, on beholding her again, the first thing that he admired was her rhythmic tread, light and graceful as she passed through the garden seeking another seat. Her features were not regular but they had a piquant fascination—a true Parisian face. Everything that had been invented for the embellishment of feminine charm was used about her person with the most exquisite fastidiousness. She had always lived for herself. Only a few months before had she abdicated a part of this sweet selfishness, sacrificing reunions, teas, and calls in order to give Desnoyers some of the afternoon hours.

Stylish and painted like a priceless doll, with no loftier ambition than to be a model, interpreting with personal elegance the latest confections of the modistes, she was at last experiencing the same preoccupations and joys as other women, creating for herself an inner life. The nucleus of this new life, hidden under her former frivolity, was Desnoyers. Just as she was imagining that she had reorganized her existence—adjusting the satisfactions of worldly elegance to the delights of love in intimate secrecy—a fulminating catastrophe (the intervention of her husband whose possible appearance she seemed to have overlooked) had disturbed her thoughtless happiness. She who was accustomed to think herself the centre of the universe, imagining that events ought to revolve around her desires and tastes, had suffered this cruel surprise with more astonishment than grief.

"And you, how do you think I look?" Marguerite queried.

"I must tell you that the fashion has changed. The sheath skirt has passed away. Now it is worn short and with more fullness."

Desnoyers had to interest himself in her apparel with the same devotion, mixing his appreciation of the latest freak of the fashion-monger with his eulogies of Marguerite's beauty.

"Have you thought much about me?" she continued. "You have not been unfaithful to me a single time? Not even once? . . . Tell me the truth; you know I can always tell when you are lying."

"I have always thought of you," he said putting his hand on his heart, as if he were swearing before a judge.

And he said it roundly, with an accent of truth, since in his infidelities—now completely forgotten—the memory of Marguerite had always been present.

"But let us talk about you!" added Julio. "What have you been doing all the time?"

He had brought his chair nearer to hers, and their knees touched. He took one of her hands, patting it and putting his finger in the glove opening. Oh, that accursed garden which would not permit greater intimacy and obliged them to speak in a low tone, after three months' absence! . . . In spite of his discretion, the man who was reading his paper raised his head and looked irritably at them over his spectacles as though a fly were distracting him with its buzzing. . . . The very idea of talking love-nonsense in a public garden when all Europe was threatened with calamity!

Repelling the audacious hand, Marguerite spoke tranquilly of her existence during the last months.

"I have passed my life the best I could, but I have been greatly bored. You know that I am now living with mama, and mama is a lady of the old regime who does not understand our tastes. I have been to the theatres with my brother. I have made many calls on the lawyer in order to learn the progress of my divorce and hurry it along . . . and nothing else."

"And your husband?"

"Don't let's talk about him. Do you want to? I pity the poor man! So good . . . so correct. The lawyer assures me that he agrees to everything and will not impose any obstacles. They tell me that he does not come to Paris, that he lives in his factory. Our old home is closed. There are times when I feel remorseful over the way I have treated him."

"And I?" queried Julio, withdrawing his hand.

"You are right," she returned smiling. "You are Life. It is cruel but it is human. We have to live our lives without taking others into consideration. It is necessary to be selfish in order to be happy."

The two remained silent. The remembrance of the husband had swept across them like a glacial blast. Julio was the first to brighten up.

"And you have not danced in all this time?"

"No, how could I? The very idea, a woman in divorce proceedings! . . . I have not been to a single chic party since you went away. I wanted to preserve a certain decorous mourning fiesta. How horrible it was! . . . It needed you, the Master!"

They had again clasped hands and were smiling. Memories of the previous months were passing before their eyes, visions of their life from five to seven in the afternoon, dancing in the hotels of the Champs Elysees where the tango had been inexorably associated with a cup of tea.

She appeared to tear herself away from these recollections, impelled by a tenacious obsession which had slipped from her mind in the first moments of their meeting.

"Do you know much about what's happening? Tell me all. People talk so much. . . . Do you really believe that there will be war? Don't you think that it will all end in some kind of settlement?"

Desnoyers comforted her with his optimism. He did not believe in the possibility of a war. That was ridiculous.

"I say so, too! Ours is not the epoch of savages. I have known some Germans, chic and well-educated persons who surely must think exactly as we do. An old professor who comes to the house

was explaining yesterday to mama that wars are no longer possible in these progressive times. In two months' time, there would scarcely be any men left, in three, the world would find itself without money to continue the struggle. I do not recall exactly how it was, but he explained it all very clearly, in a manner most delightful to hear."

She reflected in silence, trying to co-ordinate her confused recollections, but dismayed by the effort required, added on her own account.

"Just imagine what war would mean—how horrible! Society life paralyzed. No more parties, nor clothes, nor theatres! Why, it is even possible that they might not design any more fashions! All the women in mourning. Can you imagine it? . . . And Paris deserted. . . . How beautiful it seemed as I came to meet you this afternoon! . . . No, no, it cannot be! Next month, you know, we go to Vichy. Mama needs the waters. Then to Biarritz. After that, I shall go to a castle on the Loire. And besides there are our affairs, my divorce, our marriage which may take place the next year. . . . And is war to hinder and cut short all this! No, no, it is not possible. My brother and others like him are foolish enough to dream of danger from Germany. I am sure that my husband, too, who is only interested in serious and bothersome matters, is among those who believe that war is imminent and prepare to take part in it. What nonsense! Tell me that it is all nonsense. I need to hear you say it."

Tranquilized by the affirmations of her lover, she then changed the trend of the conversation. The possibility of their approaching marriage brought to mind the object of the voyage which Desnoyers had just made. There had not been time for them to write to each other during their brief separation.

"Did you succeed in getting the money? The joy of seeing you made me forget all about such things. . . ."

Adopting the air of a business expert, he replied that he had brought back less than he expected, for he had found the country in the throes of one of its periodical panics; but still he had managed to get together about four hundred thousand francs. In his purse he had a check for that amount. Later on, they would send him further remittances. A ranchman in Argentina, a sort of relative, was looking after his affairs. Marguerite appeared satisfied, and in spite of her frivolity, adopted the air of a serious woman.

"Money, money!" she exclaimed sententiously. "And yet there is no happiness without it! With your four hundred thousand and what I have, we shall be able to get along. . . . I told you that my husband wishes to give me back my dowry. He has told my brother so. But the state of his business, and the increased size of his factory do not permit him to return it as quickly as he would like. I can't help but feel sorry for the poor man . . . so honorable and so upright in every way. If he only were not so commonplace! . . ."

Again Marguerite seemed to regret these tardy spontaneous eulogies which were chilling their interview. So again she changed the trend of her chatter.

"And your family? Have you seen them?" . . .

Desnoyers had been to his father's home before starting for the Chapelle Expiatoire. A stealthy entrance into the great house on the avenue Victor Hugo, and then up to the first floor like a tradesman. Then he had slipt into the kitchen like a soldier sweetheart of the maids. His mother had come there to embrace him, poor Dona Luisa, weeping and kissing him frantically as though she had feared to lose him forever. Close behind her mother had come Luisita, nicknamed Chichi, who always surveyed him with sympathetic curiosity as if she wished to know better a brother so bad and adorable who had led decent women from the paths of virtue, and committed all kinds of follies. Then Desnoyers had been greatly surprised to see entering the kitchen with the air of a tragedy queen, a noble mother of the drama, his Aunt Elena, the one who had married a German and was living in Berlin surrounded with innumerable children.

"She has been in Paris a month. She is going to make a little visit to our castle. And it appears that her eldest son—my cousin, 'The Sage,' whom I have not seen for years—is also coming here."

The home interview had several times been interrupted by fear. “Your father is at home, be careful,” his mother had said to him each time that he had spoken above a whisper. And his Aunt Elena had stationed herself at the door with a dramatic air, like a stage heroine resolved to plunge a dagger into the tyrant who should dare to cross the threshold. The entire family was accustomed to submit to the rigid authority of Don Marcelo Desnoyers. “Oh, that old man!” exclaimed Julio, referring to his father. “He may live many years yet, but how he weighs upon us all!”

His mother, who had never wearied of looking at him, finally had to bring the interview to an end, frightened by certain approaching sounds. “Go, he might surprise us, and he would be furious.” So Julio had fled the paternal home, caressed by the tears of the two ladies and the admiring glances of Chichi, by turns ashamed and proud of a brother who had caused such enthusiasm and scandal among her friends.

Marguerite also spoke of Senor Desnoyers. A terrible tyrant of the old school with whom they could never come to an understanding.

The two remained silent, looking fixedly at each other. Now that they had said the things of greatest urgency, present interests became more absorbing. More immediate things, unspoken, seemed to well up in their timid and vacillating eyes, before escaping in the form of words. They did not dare to talk like lovers here. Every minute the cloud of witnesses seemed increasing around them. The woman with the dogs and the red wig was passing with greater frequency, shortening her turns through the square in order to greet them with a smile of complicity. The reader of the daily paper was now exchanging views with a friend on a neighboring bench regarding the possibilities of war. The garden had become a thoroughfare. The modistes upon going out from their establishments, and the ladies returning from shopping, were crossing through the square in order to shorten their walk. The little avenue was a popular short-cut. All the pedestrians were casting curious glances at the elegant lady and her companion seated in the shadow of the shrubbery with the timid yet would-be natural look of those who desire to hide themselves, yet at the same time feign a casual air.

“How exasperating!” sighed Marguerite. “They are going to find us out!”

A girl looked at her so searchingly that she thought she recognized in her an employee of a celebrated modiste. Besides, some of her personal friends who had met her in the crowded shops but an hour ago might be returning home by way of the garden.

“Let us go,” she said rising hurriedly. “If they should spy us here together, just think what they might say! . . . and just when they are becoming a little forgetful!”

Desnoyers protested crossly. Go away? . . . Paris had become a shrunken place for them nowadays because Marguerite refused to go to a single place where there was a possibility of their being surprised. In another square, in a restaurant, wherever they might go—they would run the same risk of being recognized. She would only consider meetings in public places, and yet at the same time, dreaded the curiosity of the people. If Marguerite would like to go to his studio of such sweet memories! . . .

“To your home? No! no indeed!” she replied emphatically “I cannot forget the last time I was there.”

But Julio insisted, foreseeing a break in that firm negative. Where could they be more comfortable? Besides, weren’t they going to marry as soon as possible? . . .

“I tell you no,” she repeated. “Who knows but my husband may be watching me! What a complication for my divorce if he should surprise us in your house!”

Now it was he who eulogized the husband, insisting that such watchfulness was incompatible with his character. The engineer had accepted the facts, considering them irreparable and was now thinking only of reconstructing his life.

“No, it is better for us to separate,” she continued. “Tomorrow we shall see each other again. You will hunt a more favorable place. Think it over, and you will find a solution for it all.”

But he wished an immediate solution. They had abandoned their seats, going slowly toward the rue des Mathurins. Julio was speaking with a trembling and persuasive eloquence. To-morrow? No, now. They had only to call a taxicab. It would be only a matter of a few minutes, and then the isolation, the mystery, the return to a sweet past—to that intimacy in the studio where they had passed their happiest hours. They would believe that no time had elapsed since their first meetings.

"No," she faltered with a weakening accent, seeking a last resistance. "Besides, your secretary might be there, that Spaniard who lives with you. How ashamed I would be to meet him again!"

Julio laughed. . . . Argensola! How could that comrade who knew all about their past be an obstacle? If they should happen to meet him in the house, he would be sure to leave immediately. More than once, he had had to go out so as not to be in the way. His discretion was such that he had foreseen events. Probably he had already left, conjecturing that a near visit would be the most logical thing. His chum would simply go wandering through the streets in search of news.

Marguerite was silent, as though yielding on seeing her pretexts exhausted. Desnoyers was silent, too, construing her stillness as assent. They had left the garden and she was looking around uneasily, terrified to find herself in the open street beside her lover, and seeking a hiding-place. Suddenly she saw before her the little red door of an automobile, opened by the hand of her adorer.

"Get in," ordered Julio.

And she climbed in hastily, anxious to hide herself as soon as possible. The vehicle started at great speed. Marguerite immediately pulled down the shade of the window on her side, but, before she had finished and could turn her head, she felt a hungry mouth kissing the nape of her neck.

"No, not here," she said in a pleading tone. "Let us be sensible!"

And while he, rebellious at these exhortations, persisted in his advances, the voice of Marguerite again sounded above the noise of the rattling machinery of the automobile as it bounded over the pavement.

"Do you really believe that there will be no war? Do you believe that we will be able to marry? . . . Tell me again. I want you to encourage me . . . I need to hear it from your lips."

CHAPTER II
MADARIAGA, THE CENTAUR

In 1870 Marcelo Desnoyers was nineteen years old. He was born in the suburbs of Paris, an only child; his father, interested in little building speculations, maintained his family in modest comfort. The mason wished to make an architect of his son, and Marcelo was in the midst of his preparatory studies when his father suddenly died, leaving his affairs greatly involved. In a few months, he and his mother descended the slopes of ruin, and were obliged to give up their snug, middle-class quarters and live like laborers.

When the fourteen-year-old boy had to choose a trade, he learned wood carving. This craft was an art related to the tastes awakened in Marcelo by his abandoned studies. His mother retired to the country, living with some relatives while the lad advanced rapidly in the shops, aiding his master in all the important orders which he received from the provinces. The first news of the war with Prussia surprised him in Marseilles, working on the decorations of a theatre.

Marcelo was opposed to the Empire like all the youths of his generation. He was also much influenced by the older workmen who had taken part in the Republic of '48, and who still retained vivid recollections of the Coup d'Etat of the second of December.

One day he saw in the streets of Marseilles a popular manifestation in favor of peace which was practically a protest against the government. The old republicans in their implacable struggle with the Emperor, the companies of the International which had just been organized, and a great number of Italians and Spaniards who had fled their countries on account of recent insurrections, composed the procession. A long-haired, consumptive student was carrying the flag. "It is peace that we want—a peace which may unite all mankind," chanted the paraders. But on this earth, the noblest propositions are seldom heard, since Destiny amuses herself in perverting them and turning them aside.

Scarcely had the friends of peace entered the rue Cannebiere with their hymn and standard, when war came to meet them, obliging them to resort to fist and club. The day before, some battalions of Zouaves from Algiers had disembarked in order to reinforce the army on the frontier, and these veterans, accustomed to colonial existence and undiscriminating as to the cause of disturbances, seized the opportunity to intervene in this manifestation, some with bayonets and others with ungirded belts. "Hurrah for War!" and a rain of lashes and blows fell upon the unarmed singers. Marcelo saw the innocent student, the standard-bearer of peace, knocked down wrapped in his flag, by the merry kicks of the Zouaves. Then he knew no more, since he had received various blows with a leather strap, and a knife thrust in his shoulder; he had to run the same as the others.

That day developed for the first time, his fiery, stubborn character, irritable before contradiction, even to the point of adopting the most extreme resolution. "Down with War!" Since it was not possible for him to protest in any other way, he would leave the country. The Emperor might arrange his affairs as best he could. The struggle was going to be long and disastrous, according to the enemies of the Empire. If he stayed, he would in a few months be drawn for the soldiery. Desnoyers renounced the honor of serving the Emperor. He hesitated a little when he thought of his mother. But his country relatives would not turn her out, and he planned to work very hard and send her money. Who knew what riches might be waiting for him, on the other side of the sea! . . . Good-bye, France!

Thanks to his savings, a harbor official found it to his interest to offer him the choice of three boats. One was sailing to Egypt, another to Australia, another to Montevideo and Buenos Aires, which made the strongest appeal to him? . . . Desnoyers, remembering his readings, wished to consult the wind and follow the course that it indicated, as he had seen various heroes of novels do. But that day the wind blew from the sea toward France. He also wished to toss up a coin in order to test his fate. Finally he decided upon the vessel sailing first. Not until, with his scanty baggage, he was actually on the deck of the next boat to anchor, did he take any interest in its course—"For the Rio de la Plata." . . .

And he accepted these words with a fatalistic shrug. “Very well, let it be South America!” The country was not distasteful to him, since he knew it by certain travel publications whose illustrations represented herds of cattle at liberty, half-naked, plumed Indians, and hairy cowboys whirling over their heads serpentine lassos tipped with balls.

The millionaire Desnoyers never forgot that trip to America—forty-three days navigating in a little worn-out steamer that rattled like a heap of old iron, groaned in all its joints at the slightest roughness of the sea, and had to stop four times for repairs, at the mercy of the winds and waves.

In Montevideo, he learned of the reverses suffered by his country and that the French Empire no longer existed. He felt a little ashamed when he heard that the nation was now self-governing, defending itself gallantly behind the walls of Paris. And he had fled! . . . Months afterwards, the events of the Commune consoled him for his flight. If he had remained, wrath at the national downfall, his relations with his co-laborers, the air in which he lived—everything would surely have dragged him along to revolt. In that case, he would have been shot or consigned to a colonial prison like so many of his former comrades.

So his determination crystallized, and he stopped thinking about the affairs of his mother-country. The necessities of existence in a foreign land whose language he was beginning to pick up made him think only of himself. The turbulent and adventurous life of these new nations compelled him to most absurd expedients and varied occupations. Yet he felt himself strong with an audacity and self-reliance which he never had in the old world. “I am equal to everything,” he said, “if they only give me time to prove it!” Although he had fled from his country in order not to take up arms, he even led a soldier’s life for a brief period in his adopted land, receiving a wound in one of the many hostilities between the whites and reds in the unsettled districts.

In Buenos Aires, he again worked as a woodcarver. The city was beginning to expand, breaking its shell as a large village. Desnoyers spent many years ornamenting salons and facades. It was a laborious existence, sedentary and remunerative. But one day he became tired of this slow saving which could only bring him a mediocre fortune after a long time. He had gone to the new world to become rich like so many others. And at twenty-seven, he started forth again, a full-fledged adventurer, avoiding the cities, wishing to snatch money from untapped, natural sources. He worked farms in the forests of the North, but the locusts obliterated his crops in a few hours. He was a cattle-driver, with the aid of only two peons, driving a herd of oxen and mules over the snowy solitudes of the Andes to Bolivia and Chile. In this life, making journeys of many months’ duration, across interminable plains, he lost exact account of time and space. Just as he thought himself on the verge of winning a fortune, he lost it all by an unfortunate speculation. And in a moment of failure and despair, being now thirty years old, he became an employee of Julio Madariaga.

He knew of this rustic millionaire through his purchases of flocks—a Spaniard who had come to the country when very young, adapting himself very easily to its customs, and living like a cowboy after he had acquired enormous properties. The country folk, wishing to put a title of respect before his name, called him Don Madariaga.

“Comrade,” he said to Desnoyers one day when he happened to be in a good humor—a very rare thing for him—“you must have passed through many ups and downs. Your lack of silver may be smelled a long ways off. Why lead such a dog’s life? Trust in me, Frenchy, and remain here! I am growing old, and I need a man.”

After the Frenchman had arranged to stay with Madariaga, every landed proprietor living within fifteen or twenty leagues of the ranch, stopped the new employee on the road to prophesy all sorts of misfortune.

“You will not stay long. Nobody can get along with Don Madariaga. We have lost count of his overseers. He is a man who must be killed or deserted. Soon you will go, too!”

Desnoyers did not doubt but that there was some truth in all this. Madariaga was an impossible character, but feeling a certain sympathy with the Frenchman, had tried not to annoy him with his irritability.

"He's a regular pearl, this Frenchy," said the plainsman as though trying to excuse himself for his considerate treatment of his latest acquisition. "I like him because he is very serious. . . . That is the way I like a man."

Desnoyers did not know exactly what this much-admired seriousness could be, but he felt a secret pride in seeing him aggressive with everybody else, even his family, whilst he took with him a tone of paternal bluffness.

The family consisted of his wife Misia Petrona (whom he always called the China) and two grown daughters who had gone to school in Buenos Aires, but on returning to the ranch had reverted somewhat to their original rusticity.

Madariaga's fortune was enormous. He had lived in the field since his arrival in America, when the white race had not dared to settle outside the towns for fear of the Indians. He had gained his first money as a fearless trader, taking merchandise in a cart from fort to fort. He had killed Indians, was twice wounded by them, and for a while had lived as a captive with an Indian chief whom he finally succeeded in making his staunch friend. With his earnings, he had bought land, much land, almost worthless because of its insecurity, devoting it to the raising of cattle that he had to defend, gun in hand, from the pirates of the plains.

Then he had married his China, a young half-breed who was running around barefoot, but owned many of her forefathers' fields. They had lived in an almost savage poverty on their property which would have taken many a day's journey to go around. Afterwards, when the government was pushing the Indians towards the frontiers, and offering the abandoned lands for sale, considering it a patriotic sacrifice on the part of any one wishing to acquire them, Madariaga bought and bought at the lowest figure and longest terms. To get possession of vast tracts and populate it with blooded stock became the mission of his life. At times, galloping with Desnoyers through his boundless fields, he was not able to repress his pride.

"Tell me something, Frenchy! They say that further up the country, there are some nations about the size of my ranches. Is that so?" . . .

The Frenchman agreed. . . . The lands of Madariaga were indeed greater than many principalities. This put the old plainsman in rare good humor and he exclaimed in the cowboy vernacular which had become second nature to him—"Then it wouldn't be absurd to proclaim myself king some day? Just imagine it, Frenchy;—Don Madariaga, the First. . . . The worst of it all is that I would also be the last, for the China will not give me a son. . . . She is a weak cow!"

The fame of his vast territories and his wealth in stock reached even to Buenos Aires. Every one knew of Madariaga by name, although very few had seen him. When he went to the Capital, he passed unnoticed because of his country aspect—the same leggings that he was used to wearing in the fields, his poncho wrapped around him like a muffler above which rose the aggressive points of a necktie, a tormenting ornament imposed by his daughters, who in vain arranged it with loving hands that he might look a little more respectable.

One day he entered the office of the richest merchant of the capital.

"Sir, I know that you need some young bulls for the European market, and I have come to sell you a few."

The man of affairs looked haughtily at the poor cowboy. He might explain his errand to one of the employees, he could not waste his time on such small matters. But the malicious grin on the rustic's face awoke his curiosity.

"And how many are you able to sell, my good man?"

"About thirty thousand, sir."

It was not necessary to hear more. The supercilious merchant sprang from his desk, and obsequiously offered him a seat.

"You can be no other than Don Madariaga."

"At the service of God and yourself, sir," he responded in the manner of a Spanish countryman.

That was the most glorious moment of his existence.

In the outer office of the Directors of the Bank, the clerks offered him a seat until the personage the other side of the door should deign to receive him. But scarcely was his name announced than that same director ran to admit him, and the employee was stupefied to hear the ranchman say, by way of greeting, "I have come to draw out three hundred thousand dollars. I have abundant pasturage, and I wish to buy a ranch or two in order to stock them."

His arbitrary and contradictory character weighed upon the inhabitants of his lands with both cruel and good-natured tyranny. No vagabond ever passed by the ranch without being rudely assailed by its owner from the outset.

"Don't tell me any of your hard-luck stories, friend," he would yell as if he were going to beat him. "Under the shed is a skinned beast; cut and eat as much as you wish and so help yourself to continue your journey. . . . But no more of your yarns!"

And he would turn his back upon the tramp, after giving him a few dollars.

One day he became infuriated because a peon was nailing the wire fencing too deliberately on the posts. Everybody was robbing him! The following day he spoke of a large sum of money that he would have to pay for having endorsed the note of an acquaintance, completely bankrupt. "Poor fellow! His luck is worse than mine!"

Upon finding in the road the skeleton of a recently killed sheep, he was beside himself with indignation. It was not because of the loss of the meat. "Hunger knows no law, and God has made meat for mankind to eat. But they might at least have left the skin!" . . . And he would rage against such wickedness, always repeating, "Lack of religion and good habits!" The next time, the bandits stripped the flesh off of three cows, leaving the skins in full view, and the ranchman said, smiling, "That is the way I like people, honorable and doing no wrong."

His vigor as a tireless centaur had helped him powerfully in his task of populating his lands. He was capricious, despotic and with the same paternal instincts as his compatriots who, centuries before when conquering the new world, had clarified its native blood. Like the Castilian conquistadors, he had a fancy for copper-colored beauty with oblique eyes and straight hair. When Desnoyers saw him going off on some sudden pretext, putting his horse at full gallop toward a neighboring ranch, he would say to himself, smilingly, "He is going in search of a new peon who will help work his land fifteen years from now."

The personnel of the ranch often used to comment on the resemblance of certain youths laboring here the same as the others, galloping from the first streak of dawn over the fields, attending to the various duties of pasturing. The overseer, Celedonio, a half-breed thirty years old, generally detested for his hard and avaricious character, also bore a distant resemblance to the patron.

Almost every year, some woman from a great distance, dirty and bad-faced, presented herself at the ranch, leading by the hand a little mongrel with eyes like live coals. She would ask to speak with the proprietor alone, and upon being confronted with her, he usually recalled a trip made ten or twelve years before in order to buy a herd of cattle.

"You remember, Patron, that you passed the night on my ranch because the river had risen?"

The Patron did not remember anything about it. But a vague instinct warned him that the woman was probably telling the truth. "Well, what of it?"

"Patron, here he is. . . . It is better for him to grow to manhood by your side than in any other place."

And she presented him with the little hybrid. One more, and offered with such simplicity! . . . "Lack of religion and good habits!" Then with sudden modesty, he doubted the woman's veracity. Why must it necessarily be his? . . . But his wavering was generally short-lived.

"If it's mine, put it with the others."

The mother went away tranquilly, seeing the youngster's future assured, because this man so lavish in violence was equally so in generosity. In time there would be a bit of land and a good flock of sheep for the urchin.

These adoptions at first aroused in Misia Petrona a little rebellion—the only ones of her life; but the centaur soon reduced her to terrified silence.

"And you dare to complain of me, you weak cow! . . . A woman who has only given me daughters. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

The same hand that negligently extracted from his pocket a wad of bills rolled into a ball, giving them away capriciously without knowing just how much, also wore a lash hanging from the wrist. It was supposed to be for his horse, but it was used with equal facility when any of his peons incurred his wrath.

"I strike because I can," he would say to pacify himself.

One day, the man receiving the blow, took a step backward, hunting for the knife in his belt.

"You are not going to beat me, Patron. I was not born in these parts. . . . I come from Corrientes."

The Patron remained with upraised thong. "Is it true that you were not born here? . . . Then you are right; I cannot beat you. Here are five dollars for you."

When Desnoyers came on the place, Madariaga was beginning to lose count of those who were under his dominion in the old Latin sense, and could take his blows. There were so many that confusion often reigned.

The Frenchman admired the Patron's expert eye for his business. It was enough for him to contemplate for a few moments a herd of cattle, to know its exact number. He would go galloping along with an indifferent air, around an immense group of horned and stamping beasts, and then would suddenly begin to separate the different animals. He had discovered that they were sick. With a buyer like Madariaga, all the tricks and sharp practice of the drovers came to naught.

His serenity before trouble was also admirable. A drought suddenly strewed his plains with dead cattle, making the land seem like an abandoned battlefield. Everywhere great black hulks. In the air, great spirals of crows coming from leagues away. At other times, it was the cold; an unexpected drop in the thermometer would cover the ground with dead bodies. Ten thousand animals, fifteen thousand, perhaps more, all perished!

"WHAT a knock-out!" Madariaga would exclaim with resignation. "Without such troubles, this earth would be a paradise. . . . Now, the thing to do is to save the skins!"

And he would rail against the false pride of the emigrants, against the new customs among the poor which prevented his securing enough hands to strip the victims quickly, so that thousands of hides had to be lost. Their bones whitened the earth like heaps of snow. The peoncitos (little peons) went around putting the skulls of cows with crumpled horns on the posts of the wire fences—a rustic decoration which suggested a procession of Grecian lyres.

"It is lucky that the land is left, anyway!" added the ranchman.

He loved to race around his immense fields when they were beginning to turn green in the late rains. He had been among the first to convert these virgin wastes into rich meadow-lands, supplementing the natural pasturage with alfalfa. Where one beast had found sustenance before, he now had three. "The table is set," he would chuckle, "we must now go in search of the guests." And he kept on buying, at ridiculous prices, herds dying of hunger in others' uncultivated fields, constantly increasing his opulent lands and stock.

One morning Desnoyers saved his life. The old ranchman had raised his lash against a recently arrived peon who returned the attack, knife in hand. Madariaga was defending himself as best he

could, convinced from one minute to another that he was going to receive the deadly knife-thrust—when Desnoyers arrived and, drawing his revolver, overcame and disarmed the adversary.

"Thanks, Frenchy," said the ranchman, much touched. "You are an all-round man, and I am going to reward you. From this day I shall speak to you as I do to my family."

Desnoyers did not know just what this familiar talk might amount to, for his employer was so peculiar. Certain personal favors, nevertheless, immediately began to improve his position. He was no longer allowed to eat in the administration building, the proprietor insisting imperiously that henceforth Desnoyers should sit at his own table, and thus he was admitted into the intimate life of the Madariaga family.

The wife was always silent when her husband was present. She was used to rising in the middle of the night in order to oversee the breakfasts of the peons, the distribution of biscuit, and the boiling of the great black kettles of coffee or shrub tea. She looked after the chattering and lazy maids who so easily managed to get lost in the nearby groves. In the kitchen, too, she made her authority felt like a regular house-mistress, but the minute that she heard her husband's voice she shrank into a respectful and timorous silence. Upon sitting down at table, the China would look at him with devoted submission, her great, round eyes fixed on him, like an owl's. Desnoyers felt that in this mute admiration was mingled great astonishment at the energy with which the ranchman, already over seventy, was continuing to bring new occupants to live on his demesne.

The two daughters, Luisa and Elena, accepted with enthusiasm the new arrival who came to enliven the monotonous conversations in the dining room, so often cut short by their father's wrathful outbursts. Besides, he was from Paris. "Paris!" sighed Elena, the younger one, rolling her eyes. And Desnoyers was henceforth consulted in all matters of style every time they ordered any "confections" from the shops of Buenos Aires.

The interior of the house reflected the different tastes of the two generations. The girls had a parlor with a few handsome pieces of furniture placed against the cracked walls, and some showy lamps that were never lighted. The father, with his boorishness, often invaded this room so cherished and admired by the two sisters, making the carpets look shabby and faded under his muddy boot-tracks. Upon the gilt centre-table, he loved to lay his lash. Samples of maize scattered its grains over a silk sofa which the young ladies tried to keep very choice, as though they feared it might break.

Near the entrance to the dining room was a weighing machine, and Madariaga became furious when his daughters asked him to remove it to the offices. He was not going to trouble himself to go outside every time that he wanted to know the weight of a leather skin! . . . A piano came into the ranch, and Elena passed the hours practising exercises with desperate good will. "Heavens and earth! She might at least play the Jota or the Perican, or some other lively Spanish dance!" And the irate father, at the hour of siesta, betook himself to the nearby eucalyptus trees, to sleep upon his poncho.

This younger daughter whom he dubbed La Romantica, was the special victim of his wrath and ridicule. Where had she picked up so many tastes which he and his good China never had had? Music books were piled on the piano. In a corner of the absurd parlor were some wooden boxes that had held preserves, which the ranch carpenter had been made to press into service as a bookcase.

"Look here, Frenchy," scoffed Madariaga. "All these are novels and poems! Pure lies! . . . Hot air!"

He had his private library, vastly more important and glorious, and occupying less space. In his desk, adorned with guns, thongs, and chaps studded with silver, was a little compartment containing deeds and various legal documents which the ranchman surveyed with great pride.

"Pay attention, now and hear marvellous things," announced the master to Desnoyers, as he took out one of his memorandum books.

This volume contained the pedigree of the famous animals which had improved his breeds of stock, the genealogical trees, the patents of nobility of his aristocratic beasts. He would have to read its contents to him since he did not permit even his family to touch these records. And with

his spectacles on the end of his nose, he would spell out the credentials of each animal celebrity. "Diamond III, grandson of Diamond I, owned by the King of England, son of Diamond II, winner in the races." His Diamond had cost him many thousands, but the finest horses on the ranch, those which brought the most marvellous prices, were his descendants.

"That horse had more sense than most people. He only lacked the power to talk. He's the one that's stuffed, near the door of the parlor. The girls wanted him thrown out. . . . Just let them dare to touch him! I'd chuck them out first!"

Then he would continue reading the history of a dynasty of bulls with distinctive names and a succession of Roman numbers, the same as kings—animals acquired by the stubborn ranchman in the great cattle fairs of England. He had never been there, but he had used the cable in order to compete in pounds sterling with the British owners who wished to keep such valuable stock in their own country. Thanks to these blue-blooded sires that had crossed the ocean with all the luxury of millionaire passengers, he had been able to exhibit in the concourses of Buenos Aires animals which were veritable towers of meat, edible elephants with their sides as fit and sleek as a table.

"That book amounts to something! Don't you think so, Frenchy? It is worth more than all those pictures of moons, lakes, lovers and other gewgaws that my Romantica puts on the walls to catch the dust."

And he would point out, in contrast, the precious diplomas which were adorning his desk, the metal vases and other trophies won in the fairs by the descendants of his blooded stock.

Luisa, the elder daughter, called Chicha, in the South American fashion, was much more respected by her father. "She is my poor China right over again," he said, "the same good nature, and the same faculty for work, but more of a lady." Desnoyers entirely agreed with him, and yet the father's description seemed to him weak and incomplete. He could not admit that the pale, modest girl with the great black eyes and smile of childish mischief bore the slightest resemblance to the respectable matron who had brought her into existence.

The great fiesta for Chicha was the Sunday mass. It represented a journey of three leagues to the nearest village, a weekly contact with people unlike those of the ranch. A carriage drawn by four horses took the senora and the two senoritas in the latest suits and hats arrived, via Buenos Aires, from Europe. At the suggestion of Chicha, Desnoyers accompanied them in the capacity of driver.

The father remained at home, taking advantage of this opportunity to survey his fields in their Sunday solitude, thus keeping a closer oversight on the shiftlessness of his hands. He was very religious —"Religion and good manners, you know." But had he not given thousands of dollars toward building the neighboring church? A man of his fortune should not be submitted to the same obligations as ragamuffins!

During the Sunday lunch the young ladies were apt to make comments upon the persons and merits of the young men of the village and neighboring ranches, who had lingered at the church door in order to chat with them.

"Don't fool yourselves, girls!" observed the father shrewdly. "You believe that they want you for your elegance, don't you? . . . What those shameless fellows really want are the dollars of old Madariaga, and once they had them, they would probably give you a daily beating."

For a while the ranch received numerous visitors. Some were young men of the neighborhood who arrived on spirited steeds, performing all kinds of tricks of fancy horsemanship. They wanted to see Don Julio on the most absurd pretexts, and at the same time improved the opportunity to chat with Chicha and Luisa. At other times they were youths from Buenos Aires asking for a lodging at the ranch, as they were just passing by. Don Madariaga would growl—

"Another good-for-nothing scamp who comes in search of the Spanish ranchman! If he doesn't move on soon . . . I'll kick him out!"

But the suitor did not stand long on the order of his going, intimidated by the ominous silence of the Patron. This silence, of late, had persisted in an alarming manner, in spite of the fact that the

ranch was no longer receiving visitors. Madariaga appeared abstracted, and all the family, including Desnoyers, respected and feared this taciturnity. He ate, scowling, with lowered head. Suddenly he would raise his eyes, looking at Chicha, then at Desnoyers, finally fixing them upon his wife as though asking her to give an account of things.

His Romantica simply did not exist for him. The only notice that he ever took of her was to give an ironical snort when he happened to see her leaning at sunset against the doorway, looking at the reddening glow—one elbow on the door frame and her cheek in her hand, in imitation of the posture of a certain white lady that she had seen in a chromo, awaiting the knight of her dreams.

Desnoyers had been five years in the house when one day he entered his master's private office with the brusque air of a timid person who has suddenly reached a decision.

"Don Julio, I am going to leave and I would like our accounts settled."

Madariaga looked at him slyly. "Going to leave, eh? . . . What for?" But in vain he repeated his questions. The Frenchman was floundering through a series of incoherent explanations—"I'm going; I've got to go."

"Ah, you thief, you false prophet!" shouted the ranchman in stentorian tones.

But Desnoyers did not quail before the insults. He had often heard his Patron use these same words when holding somebody up to ridicule, or haggling with certain cattle drovers.

"Ah, you thief, you false prophet! Do you suppose that I do not know why you are going? Do you suppose old Madariaga has not seen your languishing looks and those of my dead fly of a daughter, clasping each others' hands in the presence of poor China who is blinded in her judgment? . . . It's not such a bad stroke, Frenchy. By it, you would be able to get possession of half of the old Spaniard's dollars, and then say that you had made it in America."

And while he was storming, or rather howling, all this, he had grasped his lash and with the butt end kept poking his manager in the stomach with such insistence that it might be construed in an affectionate or hostile way.

"For this reason I have come to bid you good-bye," said Desnoyers haughtily. "I know that my love is absurd, and I wish to leave."

"The gentleman would go away," the ranchman continued spluttering. "The gentleman believes that here one can do what one pleases! No, siree! Here nobody commands but old Madariaga, and I order you to stay. . . . Ah, these women! They only serve to antagonize men. And yet we can't live without them!" . . .

He took several turns up and down the room, as though his last words were making him think of something very different from what he had just been saying. Desnoyers looked uneasily at the thong which was still hanging from his wrist. Suppose he should attempt to whip him as he did the peons? . . . He was still undecided whether to hold his own against a man who had always treated him with benevolence or, while his back was turned, to take refuge in discreet flight, when the ranchman planted himself before him.

"You really love her, really?" he asked. "Are you sure that she loves you? Be careful what you say, for love is blind and deceitful. I, too, when I married my China was crazy about her. Do you love her, honestly and truly? . . . Well then, take her, you devilish Frenchy. Somebody has to take her, and may she not turn out a weak cow like her mother! . . . Let us have the ranch full of grandchildren!"

In voicing this stock-raiser's wish, again appeared the great breeder of beasts and men. And as though he considered it necessary to explain his concession, he added—"I do all this because I like you; and I like you because you are serious."

Again the Frenchman was plunged in doubt, not knowing in just what this greatly appreciated seriousness consisted.

At his wedding, Desnoyers thought much of his mother. If only the poor old woman could witness this extraordinary stroke of good fortune! But she had died the year before, believing her son

enormously rich because he had been sending her sixty dollars every month, taken from the wages that he had earned on the ranch.

Desnoyers' entrance into the family made his father-in-law pay less attention to business.

City life, with all its untried enchantments and snares, now attracted Madariaga, and he began to speak with contempt of country women, poorly groomed and inspiring him with disgust. He had given up his cowboy attire, and was displaying with childish satisfaction, the new suits in which a tailor of the Capital was trying to disguise him. When Elena wished to accompany him to Buenos Aires, he would wriggle out of it, trumping up some absorbing business. "No; you go with your mother."

The fate of his fields and flocks gave him no uneasiness. His fortune, managed by Desnoyers, was in good hands.

"He is very serious," again affirmed the old Spaniard to his family assembled in the dining roam—"as serious as I am. . . . Nobody can make a fool of him!"

And finally the Frenchman concluded that when his father-in-law spoke of seriousness he was referring to his strength of character. According to the spontaneous declaration of Madariaga, he had, from the very first day that he had dealings with Desnoyers, perceived in him a nature like his own, more hard and firm perhaps, but without splurges of eccentricities. On this account he had treated him with such extraordinary circumspection, foreseeing that a clash between the two could never be adjusted. Their only disagreements were about the expenses established by Madariaga during his regime. Since the son-in-law was managing the ranches, the work was costing less, and the people working more diligently;—and that, too, without yells, and without strong words and deeds, with only his presence and brief orders.

The old man was the only one defending the capricious system of a blow followed by a gift. He revolted against a minute and mechanical administration, always the same, without any arbitrary extravagance or good-natured tyranny. Very frequently some of the half-breed peons whom a malicious public supposed to be closely related to the ranchman, would present themselves before Desnoyers with, "Senor Manager, the old Patron say that you are to give me five dollars." The Senor Manager would refuse, and soon after Madariaga would rush in in a furious temper, but measuring his words, nevertheless, remembering that his son-in-law's disposition was as serious as his own.

"I like you very much, my son, but here no one overrules me. . . . Ah, Frenchy, you are like all the rest of your countrymen! Once you get your claws on a penny, it goes into your stocking, and nevermore sees the light of day, even though they crucify you. . . ! Did I say five dollars? Give him ten. I command it and that is enough."

The Frenchman paid, shrugging his shoulders, whilst his father-in-law, satisfied with his triumph, fled to Buenos Aires. It was a good thing to have it well understood that the ranch still belonged to Madariaga, the Spaniard.

From one of these trips, he returned with a companion, a young German who, according to him, knew everything and could do everything. His son-in-law was working too hard. This Karl Hartrott would assist him in the bookkeeping. Desnoyers accepted the situation, and in a few days felt increasing esteem for the new incumbent.

Although they belonged to two unfriendly nations, it didn't matter. There are good people everywhere, and this Karl was a subordinate worth considering. He kept his distance from his equals, and was hard and inflexible toward his inferiors. All his faculties seemed concentrated in service and admiration for those above him. Scarcely would Madariaga open his lips before the German's head began nodding in agreement, anticipating his words. If he said anything funny, his clerk's laugh would break forth in scandalous roars. With Desnoyers he appeared more taciturn, working without stopping for hours at a time. As soon as he saw the manager entering the office he would leap from his seat, holding himself erect with military precision. He was always ready to do anything whatever. Unasked, he spied on the workmen, reporting their carelessness and mistakes. This last service did not especially please his superior officer, but he appreciated it as a sign of interest in the establishment.

The old man bragged triumphantly of the new acquisition, urging his son-in-law also to rejoice.

"A very useful fellow, isn't he? . . . These gringoes from Germany work well, know a good many things and cost little. Then, too, so disciplined! so servile! . . . I am sorry to praise him so to you because you are a Frenchy, and your nation has in them a very powerful enemy. His people are a hard-shelled race."

Desnoyers replied with a shrug of indifference. His country was far away, and so was Germany. Who knew if they would ever return! . . . They were both Argentinians now, and ought to interest themselves in present affairs and not bother about the past.

"And how little pride they have!" sneered Madariaga in an ironical tone. "Every one of these gringoes when he is a clerk at the Capital sweeps the shop, prepares the meals, keeps the books, sells to the customers, works the typewriter, translates four or five languages, and dances attendance on the proprietor's lady friend, as though she were a grand senora . . . all for twenty-five dollars a month. Who can compete with such people! You, Frenchy, you are like me, very serious, and would die of hunger before passing through certain things. But, mark my words, on this very account they are going to become a terrible people!"

After brief reflection, the ranchman added:

"Perhaps they are not so good as they seem. Just see how they treat those under them! It may be that they affect this simplicity without having it, and when they grin at receiving a kick, they are saying inside, 'Just wait till my turn comes, and I'll give you three!'"

Then he suddenly seemed to repent of his suspicions.

"At any rate, this Karl is a poor fellow, a mealy-mouthed simpleton who the minute I say anything opens his jaws like a fly-catcher. He insists that he comes of a great family, but who knows anything about these gringoes? . . . All of us, dead with hunger when we reach America, claim to be sons of princes."

Madariaga had placed himself on a familiar footing with his Teutonic treasure, not through gratitude as with Desnoyers, but in order to make him feel his inferiority. He had also introduced him on an equal footing in his home, but only that he might give piano lessons to his younger daughter. The Romantica was no longer framing herself in the doorway—in the gloaming watching the sunset reflections. When Karl had finished his work in the office, he was now coming to the house and seating himself beside Elena, who was tinkling away with a persistence worthy of a better fate. At the end of the hour the German, accompanying himself on the piano, would sing fragments from Wagner in such a way that it put Madariaga to sleep in his armchair with his great Paraguay cigar sticking out of his mouth.

Elena meanwhile was contemplating with increasing interest the singing gringo. He was not the knight of her dreams awaited by the fair lady. He was almost a servant, a blond immigrant with reddish hair, fat, heavy, and with bovine eyes that reflected an eternal fear of disagreeing with his chiefs. But day by day, she was finding in him something which rather modified these impressions —his feminine fairness, except where he was burned by the sun, the increasingly martial aspect of his moustachios, the agility with which he mounted his horse, his air of a troubadour, intoning with a rather weak tenor voluptuous romances whose words she did not understand.

One night, just before supper, the impressionable girl announced with a feverish excitement which she could no longer repress that she had made a grand discovery.

"Papa, Karl is of noble birth! He belongs to a great family."

The plainsman made a gesture of indifference. Other things were vexing him in those days. But during the evening, feeling the necessity of venting on somebody the wrath which had been gnawing at his vitals since his last trip to Buenos Aires, he interrupted the singer.

"See here, gringo, what is all this nonsense about nobility which you have been telling my girl?"

Karl left the piano that he might draw himself up to the approved military position before responding. Under the influence of his recent song, his pose suggested Lohengrin about to reveal the

secret of his life. His father had been General von Hartrott, one of the commanders in the war of '70. The Emperor had rewarded his services by giving him a title. One of his uncles was an intimate councillor of the King of Prussia. His older brothers were conspicuous in the most select regiments. He had carried a sword as a lieutenant.

Bored with all this grandeur, Madariaga interrupted him. "Lies . . . nonsense . . . hot air!" The very idea of a gringo talking to him about nobility! . . . He had left Europe when very young in order to cast in his lot with the revolting democracies of America, and although nobility now seemed to him something out-of-date and incomprehensible, still he stoutly maintained that the only true nobility was that of his own country. He would yield first place to the gringoes for the invention of machinery and ships, and for breeding priceless animals, but all the Counts and Marquises of Gringo-land appeared to him to be fictitious characters.

"All tomfoolery!" he blustered. "There isn't any nobility in your country, nor have you five dollars all told to rub against each other. If you had, you wouldn't come over here to play the gallant to women who are . . . you know what they are as well as I do."

To the astonishment of Desnoyers, the German received this onslaught with much humility, nodding his head in agreement with the Patron's last words.

"If there's any truth in all this twaddle about titles," continued Madariaga implacably, "swords and uniforms, what did you come here for? What in the devil did you do in your own country that you had to leave it?"

Now Karl hung his head, confused and stuttering.

"Papa, papa," pleaded Elena. "The poor little fellow! How can you humiliate him so just because he is poor?"

And she felt a deep gratitude toward her brother-in-law when he broke through his usual reserve in order to come to the rescue of the German.

"Oh, yes, of course, he's a good-enough fellow," said Madariaga, excusing himself. "But he comes from a land that I detest."

When Desnoyers made a trip to Buenos Aires a few days afterward, the cause of the old man's wrath was explained. It appeared that for some months past Madariaga had been the financial guarantor and devoted swain of a German prima donna stranded in South America with an Italian opera company. It was she who had recommended Karl—an unfortunate countryman, who after wandering through many parts of the continent, was now living with her as a sort of gentlemanly singer. Madariaga had joyously expended upon this courtesan many thousands of dollars. A childish enthusiasm had accompanied him in this novel existence midst urban dissipations until he happened to discover that his Fraulein was leading another life during his absence, laughing at him with the parasites of her retinue; whereupon he arose in his wrath and bade her farewell to the accompaniment of blows and broken furniture.

The last adventure of his life! . . . Desnoyers suspected his abdication upon hearing him admit his age, for the first time. He did not intend to return to the capital. It was all false glitter. Existence in the country, surrounded by all his family and doing good to the poor was the only sure thing. And the terrible centaur expressed himself with the idyllic tenderness and firm virtue of seventy-five years, already insensible to temptation.

After his scene with Karl, he had increased the German's salary, trying as usual, to counteract the effects of his violent outbreaks with generosity. That which he could not forget was his dependent's nobility, constantly making it the subject of new jests. That glorious boast had brought to his mind the genealogical trees of the illustrious ancestry of his prize cattle. The German was a pedigreed fellow, and thenceforth he called him by that nickname.

Seated on summer nights under the awning, he surveyed his family around him with a sort of patriarchal ecstasy. In the evening hush could be heard the buzzing of insects and the croaking of the

frogs. From the distant ranches floated the songs of the peons as they prepared their suppers. It was harvest time, and great bands of immigrants were encamped in the fields for the extra work.

Madariaga had known many of the hard old days of wars and violence. Upon his arrival in South America, he had witnessed the last years of the tyranny of Rosas. He loved to enumerate the different provincial and national revolutions in which he had taken part. But all this had disappeared and would never return. These were the times of peace, work and abundance.

"Just think of it, Frenchy," he said, driving away the mosquitoes with the puffs of his cigar. "I am Spanish, you French, Karl German, my daughters Argentinians, the cook Russian, his assistant Greek, the stable boy English, the kitchen servants Chinas (natives), Galicians or Italians, and among the peons there are many castes and laws. . . . And yet we all live in peace. In Europe, we would have probably been in a grand fight by this time, but here we are all friends."

He took much pleasure in listening to the music of the laborers—laments from Italian songs to the accompaniment of the accordion, Spanish guitars and Creole choruses, wild voices chanting of love and death.

"This is a regular Noah's ark," exulted the vainglorious patriarch.

"He means the tower of Babel," thought Desnoyers to himself, "but it's all the same thing to the old man."

"I believe," he rambled on, "that we live thus because in this part of the world there are no kings and a very small army—and mankind is thinking only of enjoying itself as much as possible, thanks to its work. But I also believe that we live so peacefully because there is such abundance that everyone gets his share. . . . How quickly we would spring to arms if the rations were less than the people!"

Again he fell into reflective silence, shortly after announcing the result of his meditations.

"Be that as it may be, we must recognize that here life is more tranquil than in the other world. Men are taken for what they are worth, and mingle together without thinking whether they came from one country or another. Over here, fellows do not come in droves to kill other fellows whom they do not know and whose only crime is that they were born in an unfriendly country. . . . Man is a bad beast everywhere, I know that; but here he eats, owns more land than he needs so that he can stretch himself, and he is good with the goodness of a well-fed dog. Over there, there are too many; they live in heaps getting in each other's way, and easily run amuck. Hurrah for Peace, Frenchy, and the simple life! Where a man can live comfortably and runs no danger of being killed for things he doesn't understand—there is his real homeland!"

And as though an echo of the rustic's reflections, Karl seated at the piano, began chanting in a low voice one of Beethoven's hymns—

"We sing the joy of life,
We sing of liberty,
We'll ne'er betray our fellow-man,
Though great the guerdon be."

Peace! . . . A few days afterward Desnoyers recalled bitterly the old man's illusion, for war—domestic war—broke loose in this idyllic stage-setting of ranch life.

"Run, Senor Manager, the old Patron has unsheathed his knife and is going to kill the German!" And Desnoyers had hurried from his office, warned by the peon's summons. Madariaga was chasing Karl, knife in hand, stumbling over everything that blocked his way. Only his son-in-law dared to stop him and disarm him.

"That shameless pedigreed fellow!" bellowed the livid old man as he writhed in Desnoyers' firm clutch. "Half famished, all he thinks he has to do is to come to my house and take away my daughters and dollars. . . . Let me go, I tell you! Let me loose that I may kill him."

And in order to free himself from Desnoyers, he tried further to explain the difficulty. He had accepted the Frenchman as a husband for his daughter because he was to his liking, modest, honest . . . and serious. But this singing Pedigreed Fellow, with all his airs! . . . He was a man that he had gotten from . . . well, he didn't wish to say just where! And the Frenchman, though knowing perfectly well what his introduction to Karl had been, pretended not to understand him.

As the German had, by this time, made good his escape, the ranchman consented to being pushed toward his house, talking all the time about giving a beating to the Romantica and another to the China for not having informed him of the courtship. He had surprised his daughter and the Gringo holding hands and exchanging kisses in a grove near the house.

"He's after my dollars," howled the irate father. "He wants America to enrich him quickly at the expense of the old Spaniard, and that is the reason for so much truckling, so much psalm-singing and so much nobility! Imposter! . . . Musician!"

And he repeated the word "musician" with contempt, as though it were the sum and substance of everything vile.

Very firmly and with few words, Desnoyers brought the wrangling to an end. While her brother-in-law protected her retreat, the Romantica, clinging to her mother, had taken refuge in the top of the house, sobbing and moaning, "Oh, the poor little fellow! Everybody against him!" Her sister meanwhile was exerting all the powers of a discreet daughter with the rampageous old man in the office, and Desnoyers had gone in search of Karl. Finding that he had not yet recovered from the shock of his terrible surprise, he gave him a horse, advising him to betake himself as quickly as possible to the nearest railway station.

Although the German was soon far from the ranch, he did not long remain alone. In a few days, the Romantica followed him. . . . Iseult of the white hands went in search of Tristan, the knight.

This event did not cause Madariaga's desperation to break out as violently as his son-in-law had expected. For the first time, he saw him weep. His gay and robust old age had suddenly fallen from him, the news having clapped ten years on to his four score. Like a child, whimpering and tremulous, he threw his arms around Desnoyers, moistening his neck with tears.

"He has taken her away! That son of a great flea . . . has taken her away!"

This time he did not lay all the blame on his China. He wept with her, and as if trying to console her by a public confession, kept saying over and over:

"It is my fault. . . . It has all been because of my very, very great sins."

Now began for Desnoyers a period of difficulties and conflicts. The fugitives, on one of his visits to the Capital, threw themselves on his mercy, imploring his protection. The Romantica wept, declaring that only her brother-in-law, "the most knightly man in the world," could save her. Karl gazed at him like a faithful hound trusting in his master. These trying interviews were repeated on all his trips. Then, on returning to the ranch, he would find the old man ill-humored, moody, looking fixedly ahead of him as though seeing invisible power and wailing, "It is my punishment—the punishment for my sins."

The memory of the discreditable circumstances under which he had made Karl's acquaintance, before bringing him into his home, tormented the old centaur with remorse. Some afternoons, he would have a horse saddled, going full gallop toward the neighboring village. But he was no longer hunting hospitable ranches. He needed to pass some time in the church, speaking alone with the images that were there only for him—since he had footed the bills for them. . . . "Through my sin, through my very great sin!"

But in spite of his self-reproach, Desnoyers had to work very hard to get any kind of a settlement out of the old penitent. Whenever he suggested legalizing the situation and making the necessary arrangements for their marriage, the old tyrant would not let him go on. "Do what you think best, but don't say anything to me about it."

Several months passed by. One day the Frenchman approached him with a certain air of mystery. “Elena has a son and has named him ‘Julio’ after you.”

“And you, you great useless hulk,” stormed the ranchman, “and that weak cow of a wife of yours, you dare to live tranquilly on without giving me a grandson! . . . Ah, Frenchy, that is why the Germans will finally overwhelm you. You see it, right here. That bandit has a son, while you, after four years of marriage . . . nothing. I want a grandson!—do you understand THAT?”

And in order to console himself for this lack of little ones around his own hearth, he betook himself to the ranch of his overseer, Celedonio, where a band of little half-breeds gathered tremblingly and hopefully about him.

Suddenly China died. The poor Misia Petrona passed away as discreetly as she had lived, trying even in her last hours to avoid all annoyance for her husband, asking his pardon with an imploring look for any trouble which her death might cause him. Elena came to the ranch in order to see her mother’s body for the last time, and Desnoyers who for more than a year had been supporting them behind his father-in-law’s back, took advantage of this occasion to overcome the old man’s resentment.

“Well, I’ll forgive her,” said the ranchman finally. “I’ll do it for the sake of my poor wife and for you. She may remain on the ranch, and that shameless gringo may come with her.”

But he would have nothing to do with him. The German was to be an employee under Desnoyers, and they could live in the office building as though they did not belong to the family. He would never say a word to Karl.

But scarcely had the German returned before he began giving him orders rudely as though he were a perfect stranger. At other times he would pass by him as though he did not know him. Upon finding Elena in the house with his older daughter, he would go on without speaking to her.

In vain his Romantica transfigured by maternity, improved all opportunities for putting her child in his way, calling him loudly by name: “Julio . . . Julio!”

“They want that brat of a singing gringo, that carrot top with a face like a skinned kid to be my grandson? . . . I prefer Celedonio’s.”

And by way of emphasizing his protest, he entered the dwelling of his overseer, scattering among his dusky brood handfuls of dollars.

After seven years of marriage, the wife of Desnoyers found that she, too, was going to become a mother. Her sister already had three sons. But what were they worth to Madariaga compared to the grandson that was going to come? “It will be a boy,” he announced positively, “because I need one so. It shall be named Julio, and I hope that it will look like my poor dead wife.”

Since the death of his wife he no longer called her the China, feeling something of a posthumous love for the poor woman who in her lifetime had endured so much, so timidly and silently. Now “my poor dead wife” cropped out every other instant in the conversation of the remorseful ranchman.

His desires were fulfilled. Luisa gave birth to a boy who bore the name of Julio, and although he did not show in his somewhat sketchy features any striking resemblance to his grandmother, still he had the black hair and eyes and olive skin of a brunette. Welcome! . . . This WAS a grandson!

In the generosity of his joy, he even permitted the German to enter the house for the baptismal ceremony.

When Julio Desnoyers was two years old, his grandfather made the rounds of his estates, holding him on the saddle in front of him. He went from ranch to ranch in order to show him to the copper-colored populace, like an ancient monarch presenting his heir. Later on, when the child was able to say a few words, he entertained himself for hours at a time talking with the tot under the shade of the eucalyptus tree. A certain mental failing was beginning to be noticed in the old man. Although not exactly in his dotage, his aggressiveness was becoming very childish. Even in his most affectionate moments, he used to contradict everybody, and hunt up ways of annoying his relatives.

“Come here, you false prophet,” he would say to Julio. “You are a Frenchy.”

The grandchild protested as though he had been insulted. His mother had taught him that he was an Argentinian, and his father had suggested that she also add Spanish, in order to please the grandfather.

"Very well, then; if you are not a Frenchy, shout, 'Down with Napoleon!'"

And he looked around him to see if Desnoyers might be near, believing that this would displease him greatly. But his son-in-law pursued the even tenor of his way, shrugging his shoulders.

"Down with Napoleon!" repeated Julio.

And he instantly held out his hand while his grandfather went through his pockets.

Karl's sons, now four in number, used to circle around their grandparent like a humble chorus kept at a distance, and stare enviously at these gifts. In order to win his favor, they one day when they saw him alone, came boldly up to him, shouting in unison, "Down with Napoleon!"

"You insolent gringoes!" ranted the old man. "That's what that shameless father has taught you! If you say that again, I'll chase you with a cat-o-nine-tails. . . . The very idea of insulting a great man in that way!"

While he tolerated this blond brood, he never would permit the slightest intimacy. Desnoyers and his wife often had to come to their rescue, accusing the grandfather of injustice. And in order to pour the vials of his wrath out on someone, the old plainsman would hunt up Celedonio, the best of his listeners, who invariably replied, "Yes, Patron. That's so, Patron."

"They're not to blame," agreed the old man, "but I can't abide them! Besides, they are so like their father, so fair, with hair like a shredded carrot, and the two oldest wearing specs as if they were court clerks! . . . They don't seem like folks with those glasses; they look like sharks."

Madariaga had never seen any sharks, but he imagined them, without knowing why, with round, glassy eyes, like the bottoms of bottles.

By the time he was eight years old, Julio was a famous little equestrian. "To horse, peoncito," his grandfather would cry, and away they would race, streaking like lightning across the fields, midst thousands and thousands of horned herds. The "peoncito," proud of his title, obeyed the master in everything, and so learned to whirl the lasso over the steers, leaving them bound and conquered. Upon making his pony take a deep ditch or creep along the edge of the cliffs, he sometimes fell under his mount, but clambered up gamely.

"Ah, fine cowboy!" exclaimed the grandfather bursting with pride in his exploits. "Here are five dollars for you to give a handkerchief to some china."

The old man, in his increasing mental confusion, did not gauge his gifts exactly with the lad's years; and the infantile horseman, while keeping the money, was wondering what china was referred to, and why he should make her a present.

Desnoyers finally had to drag his son away from the baleful teachings of his grandfather. It was simply useless to have masters come to the house, or to send Julio to the country school. Madariaga would always steal his grandson away, and then they would scour the plains together. So when the boy was eleven years old, his father placed him in a big school in the Capital.

The grandfather then turned his attention to Julio's three-year-old sister, exhibiting her before him as he had her brother, as he took her from ranch to ranch. Everybody called Chicha's little girl Chichi, but the grandfather bestowed on her the same nickname that he had given her brother, the "peoncito." And Chichi, who was growing up wild, vigorous and wilful, breakfasting on meat and talking in her sleep of roast beef, readily fell in with the old man's tastes. She was dressed like a boy, rode astride like a man, and in order to win her grandfather's praises as "fine cowboy," carried a knife in the back of her belt. The two raced the fields from sun to sun, Madariaga following the flying pigtail of the little Amazon as though it were a flag. When nine years old she, too, could lasso the cattle with much dexterity.

What most irritated the ranchman was that his family would remember his age. He received as insults his son-in-law's counsels to remain quietly at home, becoming more aggressive and reckless

as he advanced in years, exaggerating his activity, as if he wished to drive Death away. He accepted no help except from his harum-scarum "Peoncito." When Karl's children, great hulking youngsters, hastened to his assistance and offered to hold his stirrup, he would repel them with snorts of indignation.

"So you think I am no longer able to help myself, eh! . . . There's still enough life in me to make those who are waiting for me to die, so as to grab my dollars, chew their disappointment a long while yet!"

Since the German and his wife were kept pointedly apart from the family life, they had to put up with these allusions in silence. Karl, needing protection, constantly shadowed the Frenchman, improving every opportunity to overwhelm him with his eulogies. He never could thank him enough for all that he had done for him. He was his only champion. He longed for a chance to prove his gratitude, to die for him if necessary. His wife admired him with enthusiasm as "the most gifted knight in the world." And Desnoyers received their devotion in gratified silence, accepting the German as an excellent comrade. As he controlled absolutely the family fortune, he aided Karl very generously without arousing the resentment of the old man. He also took the initiative in bringing about the realization of Karl's pet ambition—a visit to the Fatherland. So many years in America! . . . For the very reason that Desnoyers himself had no desire to return to Europe, he wished to facilitate Karl's trip, and gave him the means to make the journey with his entire family. The father-in-law had no curiosity as to who paid the expenses. "Let them go!" he said gleefully, "and may they never return!"

Their absence was not a very long one, for they spent their year's allowance in three months. Karl, who had apprised his parents of the great fortune which his marriage had brought him, wished to make an impression as a millionaire, in full enjoyment of his riches. Elena returned radiant, speaking with pride of her relatives—of the baron, Colonel of Hussars, of the Captain of the Guard, of the Councillor at Court—asserting that all countries were most insignificant when compared with her husband's. She even affected a certain condescension toward Desnoyers, praising him as "a very worthy man, but without ancient lineage or distinguished family—and French, besides."

Karl, on the other hand, showed the same devotion as before, keeping himself submissively in the background when with his brother-in-law who had the keys of the cash box and was his only defense against the browbeating old Patron. . . . He had left his two older sons in a school in Germany. Years afterwards they reached an equal footing with the other grandchildren of the Spaniard who always begrudged them their existence, "perfect frights, with carroty hair, and eyes like a shark."

Suddenly the old man became very lonely, for they had also carried off his second "Peoncito." The good Chicha could not tolerate her daughter's growing up like a boy, parading 'round on horseback all the time, and glibly repeating her grandfather's vulgarities. So she was now in a convent in the Capital, where the Sisters had to battle valiantly in order to tame the mischievous rebellion of their wild little pupil.

When Julio and Chichi returned to the ranch for their vacations, the grandfather again concentrated his fondness on the first, as though the girl had merely been a substitute. Desnoyers was becoming indignant at his son's dissipated life. He was no longer at college, and his existence was that of a student in a rich family who makes up for parental parsimony with all sorts of imprudent borrowings.

But Madariaga came to the defense of his grandson. "Ah, the fine cowboy!" . . . Seeing him again on the ranch, he admired the dash of the good looking youth, testing his muscles in order to convince himself of their strength, and making him to recount his nightly escapades as ringleader of a band of toughs in the Capital. He longed to go to Buenos Aires himself, just to see the youngster in the midst of this gay, wild life. But alas! he was not seventeen like his grandson; he had already passed eighty.

"Come here, you false prophet! Tell me how many children you have. . . . You must have a great many children, you know!"

"Father!" protested Chicha who was always hanging around, fearing her parent's bad teachings.

"Stop nagging at me!" yelled the irate old fellow in a towering temper. "I know what I'm saying."

Paternity figured largely in all his amorous fancies. He was almost blind, and the loss of his sight was accompanied by an increasing mental upset. His crazy senility took on a lewd character, expressing itself in language which scandalized or amused the community.

"Oh, you rascal, what a pretty fellow you are!" he said, leering at Julio with eyes which could no longer distinguish things except in a shadowy way. "You are the living image of my poor dead wife. . . . Have a good time, for Grandpa is always here with his money! If you could only count on what your father gives you, you would live like a hermit. These Frenchies are a close-fisted lot! But I am looking out for you. Peoncito! Spend and enjoy yourself—that's what your Granddaddy has piled up the silver for!"

When the Desnoyers children returned to the Capital, he spent his lonesome hours in going from ranch to ranch. A young half-breed would set the water for his shrub-tea to boiling on the hearth, and the old man would wonder confusedly if she were his daughter. Another, fifteen years old, would offer him a gourd filled with the bitter liquid and a silver pipe with which to sip it. . . . A grandchild, perhaps—he wasn't sure. And so he passed the afternoons, silent and sluggish, drinking gourd after gourd of shrub tea, surrounded by families who stared at him with admiration and fear.

Every time he mounted his horse for these excursions, his older daughter would protest. "At eighty-four years! Would it not be better for him to remain quietly at home. . . ." Some day something terrible would happen. . . . And the terrible thing did happen. One evening the Patron's horse came slowly home without its rider. The old man had fallen on the sloping highway, and when they found him, he was dead. Thus died the centaur as he had lived, with the lash hanging from his wrist, with his legs bowed by the saddle.

A Spanish notary, almost as old as he, produced the will. The family was somewhat alarmed at seeing what a voluminous document it was. What terrible bequests had Madariaga dictated? The reading of the first part tranquilized Karl and Elena. The old father had left considerable more to the wife of Desnoyers, but there still remained an enormous share for the Romantica and her children. "I do this," he said, "in memory of my poor dead wife, and so that people won't talk."

After this, came eighty-six legacies. Eighty-five dark-hued individuals (women and men), who had lived on the ranch for many years as tenants and retainers, were to receive the last paternal munificence of the old patriarch. At the head of these was Celedonio whom Madariaga had greatly enriched in his lifetime for no heavier work than listening to him and repeating, "That's so, Patron, that's true!" More than a million dollars were represented by these bequests in lands and herds. The one who completed the list of beneficiaries was Julio Desnoyers. The grandfather had made special mention of this namesake, leaving him a plantation "to meet his private expenses, making up for that which his father would not give him."

"But that represents hundreds of thousands of dollars!" protested Karl, who had been making himself almost obnoxious in his efforts to assure himself that his wife had not been overlooked in the will.

The days following the reading of this will were very trying ones for the family. Elena and her children kept looking at the other group as though they had just waked up, contemplating them in an entirely new light. They seemed to forget what they were going to receive in their envy of the much larger share of their relatives.

Desnoyers, benevolent and conciliatory, had a plan. An expert in administrative affairs, he realized that the distribution among the heirs was going to double the expenses without increasing the income. He was calculating, besides, the complications and disbursements necessary for a judicial division of nine immense ranches, hundreds of thousands of cattle, deposits in the banks, houses in the city, and debts to collect. Would it not be better for them all to continue living as before? . . . Had they not lived most peaceably as a united family? . . .

The German received this suggestion by drawing himself up haughtily. No; to each one should be given what was his. Let each live in his own sphere. He wished to establish himself in Europe, spending his wealth freely there. It was necessary for him to return to “his world.”

As they looked squarely at each other, Desnoyers saw an unknown Karl, a Karl whose existence he had never suspected when he was under his protection, timid and servile. The Frenchman, too, was beginning to see things in a new light.

“Very well,” he assented. “Let each take his own. That seems fair to me.”

CHAPTER III
THE DESNOYERS FAMILY

The "Madariagan succession," as it was called in the language of the legal men interested in prolonging it in order to augment their fees—was divided into two groups, separated by the ocean. The Desnoyers moved to Buenos Aires. The Hartrotts moved to Berlin as soon as Karl could sell all the legacy, to re-invest it in lands and industrial enterprises in his own country.

Desnoyers no longer cared to live in the country. For twenty years, now, he had been the head of an enormous agricultural and stock raising business, overseeing hundreds of men in the various ranches. The parcelling out of the old man's fortune among Elena and the other legatees had considerably constricted the radius of his authority, and it angered him to see established on the neighboring lands so many foreigners, almost all Germans, who had bought of Karl. Furthermore, he was getting old, his wife's inheritance amounted to about twenty millions of dollars, and perhaps his brother-in-law was showing the better judgment in returning to Europe.

So he leased some of the plantations, handed over the superintendence of others to those mentioned in the will who considered themselves left-handed members of the family—of which Desnoyers as the Patron received their submissive allegiance—and moved to Buenos Aires.

By this move, he was able to keep an eye on his son who continued living a dissipated life without making any headway in his engineering studies. Then, too, Chichi was now almost a woman —her robust development making her look older than she was—and it was not expedient to keep her on the estate to become a rustic senorita like her mother.

Dona Luisa had also tired of ranch life, the social triumphs of her sister making her a little restless. She was incapable of feeling jealous, but material ambitions made her anxious that her children should not bring up the rear of the procession in which the other grandchildren were cutting such a dashing figure.

During the year, most wonderful reports from Germany were finding their way to the Desnoyers home in the Capital. "The aunt from Berlin," as the children called her, kept sending long letters filled with accounts of dances, dinners, hunting parties and titles—many high-sounding and military titles; —"our brother, the Colonel," "our cousin, the Baron," "our uncle, the Intimate Councillor," "our great-uncle, the Truly Intimate." All the extravagances of the German social ladder, which incessantly manufactures new titles in order to satisfy the thirst for honors of a people divided into castes, were enumerated with delight by the old Romantica. She even mentioned her husband's secretary (a nobody) who, through working in the public offices, had acquired the title of Rechnungarath, Councillor of Calculations. She also referred with much pride to the retired Oberpedell which she had in her house, explaining that that meant "Superior Porter."

The news about her children was no less glorious. The oldest was the wise one of the family. He was devoted to philology and the historical sciences, but his sight was growing weaker all the time because of his omnivorous reading. Soon he would be a Doctor, and before he was thirty, a Herr Professor. The mother lamented that he had not military aspirations, considering that his tastes had somewhat distorted the lofty destinies of the family. Professorships, sciences and literature were more properly the perquisites of the Jews, unable, because of their race, to obtain preferment in the army; but she was trying to console herself by keeping in mind that a celebrated professor could, in time, acquire a social rank almost equal to that of a colonel.

Her other four sons would become officers. Their father was preparing the ground so that they might enter the Guard or some aristocratic regiment without any of the members being able to vote against their admission. The two daughters would surely marry, when they had reached a suitable age with officers of the Hussars whose names bore the magic "von" of petty nobility, haughty and charming gentlemen about whom the daughter of Misia Petrona waxed most enthusiastic.

The establishment of the Hartrotts was in keeping with these new relationships. In the home in Berlin, the servants wore knee-breeches and white wigs on the nights of great banquets. Karl had bought an old castle with pointed towers, ghosts in the cellars, and various legends of assassinations, assaults and abductions which enlivened its history in an interesting way. An architect, decorated with many foreign orders, and bearing the title of "Councillor of Construction," was engaged to modernize the mediaeval edifice without sacrificing its terrifying aspect. The Romantica described in anticipation the receptions in the gloomy salon, the light diffused by electricity, simulating torches, the crackling of the emblazoned hearth with its imitation logs bristling with flames of gas, all the splendor of modern luxury combined with the souvenirs of an epoch of omnipotent nobility—the best, according to her, in history. And the hunting parties, the future hunting parties! . . . in an annex of sandy and loose soil with pine woods—in no way comparable to the rich ground of their native ranch, but which had the honor of being trodden centuries ago by the Princes of Brandenburg, founders of the reigning house of Prussia. And all this advancement in a single year! . . .

They had, of course, to compete with other oversea families who had amassed enormous fortunes in the United States, Brazil or the Pacific coast; but these were Germans "without lineage," coarse plebeians who were struggling in vain to force themselves into the great world by making donations to the imperial works. With all their millions, the very most that they could ever hope to attain would be to marry their daughters with ordinary soldiers. Whilst Karl! . . . The relatives of Karl! . . . and the Romantica let her pen run on, glorifying a family in whose bosom she fancied she had been born.

From time to time were enclosed with Elena's effusions brief, crisp notes directed to Desnoyers. The brother-in-law continued giving an account of his operations the same as when living on the ranch under his protection. But with this deference was now mixed a badly concealed pride, an evident desire to retaliate for his times of voluntary humiliation. Everything that he was doing was grand and glorious. He had invested his millions in the industrial enterprises of modern Germany. He was stockholder of munition factories as big as towns, and of navigation companies launching a ship every half year. The Emperor was interesting himself in these works, looking benevolently on all those who wished to aid him. Besides this, Karl was buying land. At first sight, it seemed foolish to have sold the fertile fields of their inheritance in order to acquire sandy Prussian wastes that yielded only to much artificial fertilizing; but by becoming a land owner, he now belonged to the "Agrarian Party," the aristocratic and conservative group par excellence, and thus he was living in two different but equally distinguished worlds—that of the great industrial friends of the Emperor, and that of the Junkers, knights of the countryside, guardians of the old traditions and the supply-source of the officials of the King of Prussia.

On hearing of these social strides, Desnoyers could not but think of the pecuniary sacrifices which they must represent. He knew Karl's past, for on the ranch, under an impulse of gratitude, the German had one day revealed to the Frenchman the cause of his coming to America. He was a former officer in the German army, but the desire of living ostentatiously without other resources than his salary, had dragged him into committing such reprehensible acts as abstracting funds belonging to the regiment, incurring debts of honor and paying for them with forged signatures. These crimes had not been officially prosecuted through consideration of his father's memory, but the members of his division had submitted him to a tribunal of honor. His brothers and friends had advised him to shoot himself as the only remedy; but he loved life and had fled to South America where, in spite of humiliations, he had finally triumphed.

Wealth effaces the spots of the past even more rapidly than Time. The news of his fortune on the other side of the ocean made his family give him a warm reception on his first voyage home; introducing him again into their world. Nobody could remember shameful stories about a few hundred marks concerning a man who was talking about his father-in-law's lands, more extensive than many German principalities. Now, upon installing himself definitely in his country, all was forgotten.

But, oh, the contributions levied upon his vanity . . . Desnoyers shrewdly guessed at the thousands of marks poured with both hands into the charitable works of the Empress, into the imperialistic propagandas, into the societies of veterans, into the clubs of aggression and expansion organized by German ambition.

The frugal Frenchman, thrifty in his expenditures and free from social ambitions, smiled at the grandeurs of his brother-in-law. He considered Karl an excellent companion although of a childish pride. He recalled with satisfaction the years that they had passed together in the country. He could not forget the German who was always hovering around him, affectionate and submissive as a younger brother. When his family commented with a somewhat envious vivacity upon the glories of their Berlin relatives, Desnoyers would say smilingly, “Leave them in peace; they are paying very dear for their whistle.”

But the enthusiasm which the letters from Germany breathed finally created an atmosphere of disquietude and rebellion. Chichi led the attack. Why were they not going to Europe like other folks? all their friends had been there. Even the Italian and Spanish shopkeepers were making the voyage, while she, the daughter of a Frenchman, had never seen Paris! . . . Oh, Paris. The doctors in attendance on melancholy ladies were announcing the existence of a new and terrible disease, “the mania for Paris.” Dona Luisa supported her daughter. Why had she not gone to live in Europe like her sister, since she was the richer of the two? Even Julio gravely declared that in the old world he could study to better advantage. America is not the land of the learned.

Infected by the general unrest, the father finally began to wonder why the idea of going to Europe had not occurred to him long before. Thirty-four years without going to that country which was not his! . . . It was high time to start! He was living too near to his business. In vain the retired ranchman had tried to keep himself indifferent to the money market. Everybody was coining money around him. In the club, in the theatre, wherever he went, the people were talking about purchases of lands, of sales of stock, of quick negotiations with a triple profit, of portentous balances. The amount of money that he was keeping idle in the banks was beginning to weigh upon him. He finally ended by involving himself in some speculation; like a gambler who cannot see the roulette wheel without putting his hand in his pocket.

His family was right. “To Paris!” For in the Desnoyers’ mind, to go to Europe meant, of course, to go to Paris. Let the “aunt from Berlin” keep on chanting the glories of her husband’s country! “It’s sheer nonsense!” exclaimed Julio who had made grave geographical and ethnic comparisons in his nightly forays. “There is no place but Paris!” Chichi saluted with an ironical smile the slightest doubt of it—“Perhaps they make as elegant fashions in Germany as in Paris? . . . Bah!” Dona Luisa took up her children’s cry. “Paris!” . . . Never had it even occurred to her to go to a Lutheran land to be protected by her sister.

“Let it be Paris, then!” said the Frenchman, as though he were speaking of an unknown city.

He had accustomed himself to believe that he would never return to it. During the first years of his life in America, the trip would have been an impossibility because of the military service which he had evaded. Then he had vague news of different amnesties. After the time for conscription had long since passed, an inertness of will had made him consider a return to his country as somewhat absurd and useless. On the other side, nothing remained to attract him. He had even lost track of those country relatives with whom his mother had lived. In his heaviest hours he had tried to occupy his activity by planning an enormous mausoleum, all of marble, in La Recoleta, the cemetery of the rich, in order to move thither the remains of Madariaga as founder of the dynasty, following him with all his own when their hour should come. He was beginning to feel the weight of age. He was nearly seventy years old, and the rude life of the country, the horseback rides in the rain, the rivers forded upon his swimming horse, the nights passed in the open air, had brought on a rheumatism that was torturing his best days.

His family, however, reawakened his enthusiasm. “To Paris!” . . . He began to fancy that he was twenty again, and forgetting his habitual parsimony, wished his household to travel like royalty, in the most luxurious staterooms, and with personal servants. Two copper-hued country girls, born on the ranch and elevated to the rank of maids to the senora and her daughter, accompanied them on the voyage, their oblique eyes betraying not the slightest astonishment before the greatest novelties.

Once in Paris, Desnoyers found himself quite bewildered. He confused the names of streets, proposed visits to buildings which had long since disappeared, and all his attempts to prove himself an expert authority on Paris were attended with disappointment. His children, guided by recent reading up, knew Paris better than he. He was considered a foreigner in his own country. At first, he even felt a certain strangeness in using his native tongue, for he had remained on the ranch without speaking a word of his language for years at a time. He was used to thinking in Spanish, and translating his ideas into the speech of his ancestors spattered his French with all kinds of Creole dialect.

“Where a man makes his fortune and raises his family, there is his true country,” he said sententiously, remembering Madariaga.

The image of that distant country dominated him with insistent obsession as soon as the impressions of the voyage had worn off. He had no French friends, and upon going into the street, his feet instinctively took him to the places where the Argentinians gathered together. It was the same with them. They had left their country only to feel, with increasing intensity, the desire to talk about it all the time. There he read the papers, commenting on the rising prices in the fields, on the prospects for the next harvests and on the sales of cattle. Returning home, his thoughts were still in America, and he chuckled with delight as he recalled the way in which the two chinas had defied the professional dignity of the French cook, preparing their native stews and other dishes in Creole style.

He had settled the family in an ostentatious house in the avenida Victor Hugo, for which he paid a rental of twenty-eight thousand francs. Dona Luisa had to go and come many times before she could accustom herself to the imposing aspect of the concierges—he, decorated with gold trimmings on his black uniform and wearing white whiskers like a notary in a comedy, she with a chain of gold upon her exuberant bosom, and receiving the tenants in a red and gold salon. In the rooms above was ultra-modern luxury, gilded and glacial, with white walls and glass doors with tiny panes which exasperated Desnoyers, who longed for the complicated carvings and rich furniture in vogue during his youth. He himself directed the arrangement and furnishings of the various rooms which always seemed empty.

Chichi protested against her father’s avarice when she saw him buying slowly and with much calculation and hesitation. “Avarice, no!” he retorted, “it is because I know the worth of things.”

Nothing pleased him that he had not acquired at one-third of its value. Beating down those who overcharged but proved the superiority of the buyer. Paris offered him one delightful spot which he could not find anywhere else in the world—the Hotel Drouot. He would go there every afternoon that he did not find other important auctions advertised in the papers. For many years, there was no famous failure in Parisian life, with its consequent liquidation, from which he did not carry something away. The use and need of these prizes were matters of secondary interest, the great thing was to get them for ridiculous prices. So the trophies from the auction-rooms now began to inundate the apartment which, at the beginning, he had been furnishing with such desperate slowness.

His daughter now complained that the home was getting overcrowded. The furnishings and ornaments were handsome, but too many . . . far too many! The white walls seemed to scowl at the magnificent sets of chairs and the overflowing glass cabinets. Rich and velvety carpets over which had passed many generations, covered all the compartments. Showy curtains, not finding a vacant frame in the salons, adorned the doors leading into the kitchen. The wall mouldings gradually disappeared under an overlay of pictures, placed close together like the scales of a cuirass. Who now could accuse Desnoyers of avarice? . . . He was investing far more than a fashionable contractor would have dreamed of spending.

The underlying idea still was to acquire all this for a fourth of its price—an exciting bait which lured the economical man into continuous dissipation. He could sleep well only when he had driven a good bargain during the day. He bought at auction thousands of bottles of wine consigned by bankrupt firms, and he who scarcely ever drank, packed his wine cellars to overflowing, advising his family to use the champagne as freely as ordinary wine. The failure of a furrier induced him to buy for fourteen thousand francs pelts worth ninety thousand. In consequence, the entire Desnoyers family seemed suddenly to be suffering as frightfully from cold as though a polar iceberg had invaded the avenida Victor Hugo. The father kept only one fur coat for himself but ordered three for his son. Chichi and Dona Luisa appeared arrayed in all kinds of silky and luxurious skins—one day chinchilla, other days blue fox, marten or seal.

The enraptured buyer would permit no one but himself to adorn the walls with his new acquisitions, using the hammer from the top of a step-ladder in order to save the expense of a professional picture hanger. He wished to set his children the example of economy. In his idle hours, he would change the position of the heaviest pieces of furniture, trying every kind of combination. This employment reminded him of those happy days when he handled great sacks of wheat and bundles of hides on the ranch. Whenever his son noticed that he was looking thoughtfully at a monumental sideboard or heavy piece, he prudently betook himself to other haunts.

Desnoyers stood a little in awe of the two house-men, very solemn, correct creatures always in dress suit, who could not hide their astonishment at seeing a man with an income of more than a million francs engaged in such work. Finally it was the two coppery maids who aided their Patron, the three working contentedly together like companions in exile.

Four automobiles completed the luxuriousness of the family. The children would have been more content with one—small and dashing, in the very latest style. But Desnoyers was not the man to let a bargain slip past him, so one after the other, he had picked up the four, tempted by the price. They were as enormous and majestic as coaches of state. Their entrance into a street made the passers-by turn and stare. The chauffeur needed two assistants to help him keep this flock of mastodons in order, but the proud owner thought only of the skill with which he had gotten the best of the salesmen, anxious to get such monuments out of their sight.

To his children he was always recommending simplicity and economy. “We are not as rich as you suppose. We own a good deal of property, but it produces a scanty income.”

And then, after refusing a domestic expenditure of two hundred francs, he would put five thousand into an unnecessary purchase just because it would mean a great loss to the seller. Julio and his sister kept protesting to their mother, Dona Luisa—Chichi even going so far as to announce that she would never marry a man like her father.

“Hush, hush!” exclaimed the scandalized Creole. “He has his little peculiarities, but he is very good. Never has he given me any cause for complaint. I only hope that you may be lucky enough to find his equal.”

Her husband’s quarrelsomeness, his irritable character and his masterful will all sank into insignificance when she thought of his unvarying fidelity. In so many years of married life . . . nothing! His faithfulness had been unexceptional even in the country where many, surrounded by beasts, and intent on increasing their flocks, had seemed to become contaminated by the general animalism. She remembered her father only too well! . . . Even her sister was obliged to live in apparent calmness with the vainglorious Karl, quite capable of disloyalty not because of any special lust, but just to imitate the doings of his superiors.

Desnoyers and his wife were plodding through life in a routine affection, reminding Dona Luisa, in her limited imagination, of the yokes of oxen on the ranch who refused to budge whenever another animal was substituted for the regular companion. Her husband certainly was quick tempered, holding her responsible for all the whims with which he exasperated his children, yet he could never bear to

have her out of his sight. The afternoons at the hotel Drouot would be most insipid for him unless she was at his side, the confidante of his plans and wrathful outbursts.

"To-day there is to be a sale of jewels; shall we go?"

He would make this proposition in such a gentle and coaxing voice—the voice that Dona Luisa remembered in their first talks around the old home. And so they would go together, but by different routes;—she in one of the monumental vehicles because, accustomed to the leisurely carriage rides of the ranch, she no longer cared to walk; and Desnoyers—although owner of the four automobiles, heartily abominating them because he was conservative and uneasy with the complications of new machinery—on foot under the pretext that, through lack of work, his body needed the exercise. When they met in the crowded salesrooms, they proceeded to examine the jewels together, fixing beforehand, the price they would offer. But he, quick to become exasperated by opposition, always went further, hurling numbers at his competitors as though they were blows. After such excursions, the senora would appear as majestic and dazzling as a basilica of Byzantium—ears and neck decorated with great pearls, her bosom a constellation of brilliants, her hands radiating points of light of all colors of the rainbow.

"Too much, mama," Chichi would protest. "They will take you for a pawnbroker's lady!" But the Creole, satisfied with her splendor, the crowning glory of a humble life, attributed her daughter's faultfinding to envy. Chichi was only a girl now, but later on she would thank her for having collected all these gems for her.

Already the home was unable to accommodate so many purchases. In the cellars were piled up enough paintings, furniture, statues, and draperies to equip several other dwellings. Don Marcelo began to complain of the cramped space in an apartment costing twenty-eight thousand francs a year —in reality large enough for a family four times the size of his. He was beginning to deplore being obliged to renounce some very tempting furniture bargains when a real estate agent smelled out the foreigner and relieved him of his embarrassment. Why not buy a castle? . . .

The entire family was delighted with the idea. An historic castle, the most historic that could be found, would supplement their luxurious establishment. Chichi paled with pride. Some of her friends had castles. Others, of old colonial family, who were accustomed to look down upon her for her country bringing up, would now cry with envy upon learning of this acquisition which was almost a patent of nobility. The mother smiled in the hope of months in the country which would recall the simple and happy life of her youth. Julio was less enthusiastic. The "old man" would expect him to spend much time away from Paris, but he consoled himself by reflecting that the suburban place would provide excuse for frequent automobile trips.

Desnoyers thought of the relatives in Berlin. Why should he not have his castle like the others? . . . The bargains were alluring. Historic mansions by the dozen were offered him. Their owners, exhausted by the expense of maintaining them, were more than anxious to sell. So he bought the castle of Villeblanche-sur-Marne, built in the time of the religious wars—a mixture of palace and fortress with an Italian Renaissance facade, gloomy towers with pointed hoods, and moats in which swans were swimming.

He could now live with some tracts of land over which to exercise his authority, struggling again with the resistance of men and things. Besides, the vast proportions of the rooms of the castle were very tempting and bare of furniture. This opportunity for placing the overflow from his cellars plunged him again into buying. With this atmosphere of lordly gloom, the antiques would harmonize beautifully, without that cry of protest which they always seemed to make when placed in contact with the glaring white walls of modern habitations. The historic residence required an endless outlay; on that account it had changed owners so many times.

But he and the land understood each other beautifully. . . . So at the same time that he was filling the salons, he was going to begin farming and stock-raising in the extensive parks—a reproduction in

miniature of his enterprises in South America. The property ought to be made self-supporting. Not that he had any fear of the expenses, but he did not intend to lose money on the proposition.

The acquisition of the castle brought Desnoyers a true friendship—the chief advantage in the transaction. He became acquainted with a neighbor, Senator Lacour, who twice had been Minister of State, and was now vegetating in the senate, silent during its sessions, but restless and voluble in the corridors in order to maintain his influence. He was a prominent figure of the republican nobility, an aristocrat of the new regime that had sprung from the agitations of the Revolution, just as the titled nobility had won their spurs in the Crusades. His great-grandfather had belonged to the Convention. His father had figured in the Republic of 1848. He, as the son of an exile who had died in banishment, had when very young marched behind the grandiloquent figure of Gambetta, and always spoke in glowing terms of the Master, in the hope that some of his rays might be reflected on his disciple. His son Rene, a pupil of the Ecole Centrale regarded his father as "a rare old sport," laughing a little at his romantic and humanitarian republicanism. He, nevertheless, was counting much on that same official protection treasured by four generations of Lacours dedicated to the service of the Republic, to assist him when he became an engineer.

Don Marcelo who used to look uneasily upon any new friendship, fearing a demand for a loan, gave himself up with enthusiasm to intimacy with this "grand man." The personage admired riches and recognized, besides, a certain genius in this millionaire from the other side of the sea accustomed to speaking of limitless pastures and immense herds. Their intercourse was more than the mere friendliness of a country neighborhood, and continued on after their return to Paris. Finally Rene visited the home on the avenida Victor Hugo as though it were his own.

The only disappointments in Desnoyers' new life came from his children. Chichi irritated him because of the independence of her tastes. She did not like antiques, no matter how substantial and magnificent they might be, much preferring the frivolities of the latest fashion. She accepted all her father's gifts with great indifference. Before an exquisite blonde piece of lace, centuries old, picked up at auction, she made a wry face, saying, "I would much rather have had a new dress costing three hundred francs." She and her brother were solidly opposed to everything old.

Now that his daughter was already a woman, he had confided her absolutely to the care of Dona Luisa. But the former "Peoncito" was not showing much respect for the advice and commands of the good natured Creole. She had taken up roller-skating with enthusiasm, regarding it as the most elegant of diversions. She would go every afternoon to the Ice Palace, Dona Luisa chaperoning her, although to do this she was obliged to give up accompanying her husband to his sales. Oh, the hours of deadly weariness before that frozen oval ring, watching the white circle of balancing human monkeys gliding by on runners to the sound of an organ! . . . Her daughter would pass and repass before her tired eyes, rosy from the exercise, spirals of hair escaped from her hat, streaming out behind, the folds of her skirt swinging above her skates—handsome, athletic and Amazonian, with the rude health of a child who, according to her father, "had been weaned on beefsteaks."

Finally Dona Luisa rebelled against this troublesome vigilance, preferring to accompany her husband on his hunt for underpriced riches. Chichi went to the skating rink with one of the dark-skinned maids, passing the afternoons with her sporty friends of the new world. Together they ventilated their ideas under the glare of the easy life of Paris, freed from the scruples and conventions of their native land. They all thought themselves older than they were, delighting to discover in each other unsuspected charms. The change from the other hemisphere had altered their sense of values. Some were even writing verses in French. And Desnoyers became alarmed, giving free rein to his bad humor, when Chichi of evenings, would bring forth as aphorisms that which she and her friends had been discussing, as a summary of their readings and observations.—"Life is life, and one must live! . . . I will marry the man I love, no matter who he may be. . . ."

But the daughter's independence was as nothing compared to the worry which the other child gave the Desnoyers. Ay, that other one! . . . Julio, upon arriving in Paris, had changed the bent of

his aspirations. He no longer thought of becoming an engineer; he wished to become an artist. Don Marcelo objected in great consternation, but finally yielded. Let it be painting! The important thing was to have some regular profession. The father, while he considered property and wealth as sacred rights, felt that no one should enjoy them who had not worked to acquire them.

Recalling his apprenticeship as a wood carver, he began to hope that the artistic instincts which poverty had extinguished in him were, perhaps, reappearing in his son. What if this lazy boy, this lively genius, hesitating before taking up his walk in life, should turn out to be a famous painter, after all! . . . So he agreed to all of Julio's caprices, the budding artist insisting that for his first efforts in drawing and coloring, he needed a separate apartment where he could work with more freedom. His father, therefore, established him near his home, in the rue de la Pompe in the former studio of a well-known foreign painter. The workroom and its annexes were far too large for an amateur, but the owner had died, and Desnoyers improved the opportunity offered by the heirs, and bought at a remarkable bargain, the entire plant, pictures and furnishings.

Dona Luisa at first visited the studio daily like a good mother, caring for the well-being of her son that he may work to better advantage. Taking off her gloves, she emptied the brass trays filled with cigar stubs and dusted the furniture powdered with the ashes fallen from the pipes. Julio's visitors, long-haired young men who spoke of things that she could not understand, seemed to her rather careless in their manners. . . . Later on she also met there women, very lightly clad, and was received with scowls by her son. Wasn't his mother ever going to let him work in peace? . . . So the poor lady, starting out in the morning toward the rue de la Pompe, stopped midway and went instead to the church of Saint Honore d'Eylau.

The father displayed more prudence. A man of his years could not expect to mingle with the chums of a young artist. In a few months' time, Julio passed entire weeks without going to sleep under the paternal roof. Finally he installed himself permanently in his studio, occasionally making a flying trip home that his family might know that he was still in existence. . . . Some mornings, Desnoyers would arrive at the rue de la Pompe in order to ask a few questions of the concierge. It was ten o'clock; the artist was sleeping. Upon returning at midday, he learned that the heavy sleep still continued. Soon after lunch, another visit to get better news. It was two o'clock, the young gentleman was just arising. So the father would retire, muttering stormily—"But when does this painter ever paint?" . . .

At first Julio had tried to win renown with his brush, believing that it would prove an easy task. In true artist fashion, he collected his friends around him, South American boys with nothing to do but enjoy life, scattering money ostentatiously so that everybody might know of their generosity. With serene audacity, the young canvas-dauber undertook to paint portraits. He loved good painting, "distinctive" painting, with the cloying sweetness of a romance, that copied only the forms of women. He had money, a good studio, his father was standing behind him ready to help—why shouldn't he accomplish as much as many others who lacked his opportunities? . . .

So he began his work by coloring a canvas entitled, "The Dance of the Hours," a mere pretext for copying pretty girls and selecting buxom models. These he would sketch at a mad speed, filling in the outlines with blobs of multi-colored paint, and up to this point all went well. Then he would begin to vacillate, remaining idle before the picture only to put it in the corner in hope of later inspiration. It was the same way with his various studies of feminine heads. Finding that he was never able to finish anything, he soon became resigned, like one who pants with fatigue before an obstacle waiting for a providential interposition to save him. The important thing was to be a painter . . . even though he might not paint anything. This afforded him the opportunity, on the plea of lofty aestheticism, of sending out cards of invitation and asking light women to his studio. He lived during the night. Don Marcelo, upon investigating the artist's work, could not contain his indignation. Every morning the two Desnoyers were accustomed to greet the first hours of dawn—the father leaping from his bed, the son, on his way home to his studio to throw himself upon his couch not to wake till midday.

The credulous Dona Luisa would invent the most absurd explanations to defend her son. Who could tell? Perhaps he had the habit of painting during the night, utilizing it for original work. Men resort to so many devilish things! . . .

Desnoyers knew very well what these nocturnal gusts of genius were amounting to—scandals in the restaurants of Montmartre, and scrimmages, many scrimmages. He and his gang, who believed that at seven a full dress or Tuxedo was indispensable, were like a band of Indians, bringing to Paris the wild customs of the plains. Champagne always made them quarrelsome. So they broke and paid, but their generosities were almost invariably followed by a scuffle. No one could surpass Julio in the quick slap and the ready card. His father heard with a heavy heart the news brought him by some friends thinking to flatter his vanity—his son was always victorious in these gentlemanly encounters; he it was who always scratched the enemy's skin. The painter knew more about fencing than art. He was a champion with various weapons; he could box, and was even skilled in the favorite blows of the prize fighters of the slums. "Useless as a drone, and as dangerous, too," fretted his father. And yet in the back of his troubled mind fluttered an irresistible satisfaction—an animal pride in the thought that this hare-brained terror was his own.

For a while, he thought that he had hit upon a way of withdrawing his son from such an existence. The relatives in Berlin had visited the Desnoyers in their castle of Villeblanche. With good-natured superiority, Karl von Hartrott had appreciated the rich and rather absurd accumulations of his brother-in-law. They were not bad; he admitted that they gave a certain cachet to the home in Paris and to the castle. They smacked of the possessions of titled nobility. But Germany! . . . The comforts and luxuries in his country! . . . He just wished his brother-in-law to admire the way he lived and the noble friendships that embellished his opulence. And so he insisted in his letters that the Desnoyers family should return their visit. This change of environment might tone Julio down a little. Perhaps his ambition might waken on seeing the diligence of his cousins, each with a career. The Frenchman had, besides, an underlying belief in the more corrupt influence of Paris as compared with the purity of the customs in Patriarchal Germany.

They were there four months. In a little while Desnoyers felt ready to retreat. Each to his own kind; he would never be able to understand such people. Exceedingly amiable, with an abject amiability and evident desire to please, but constantly blundering through a tactless desire to make their grandeur felt. The high-toned friends of Hartrott emphasized their love for France, but it was the pious love that a weak and mischievous child inspires, needing protection. And they would accompany their affability with all manner of inopportune memories of the wars in which France had been conquered. Everything in Germany—a monument, a railroad station, a simple dining-room device, instantly gave rise to glorious comparisons. "In France, you do not have this," "Of course, you never saw anything like this in America."

Don Marcelo came away fatigued by so much condescension, and his wife and daughter refused to be convinced that the elegance of Berlin could be superior to Paris. Chichi, with audacious sacrilege, scandalized her cousins by declaring that she could not abide the corseted officers with immovable monocle, who bowed to the women with such automatic rigidity, blending their gallantries with an air of superiority.

Julio, guided by his cousins, was saturated in the virtuous atmosphere of Berlin. With the oldest, "The Sage," he had nothing to do. He was a poor creature devoted to his books who patronized all the family with a protecting air. It was the others, the sub-lieutenants or military students, who proudly showed him the rounds of German joy.

Julio was accordingly introduced to all the night restaurants—imitations of those in Paris, but on a much larger scale. The women who in Paris might be counted by the dozens appeared here in hundreds. The scandalous drunkenness here never came by chance, but always by design as an indispensable part of the gaiety. All was grandiose, glittering, colossal. The libertines diverted themselves in platoons, the public got drunk in companies, the harlots presented themselves in

regiments. He felt a sensation of disgust before these timid and servile females, accustomed to blows, who were so eagerly trying to reimburse themselves for the losses and exposures of their business. For him, it was impossible to celebrate with hoarse ha-has, like his cousins, the discomfiture of these women when they realized that they had wasted so many hours without accomplishing more than abundant drinking. The gross obscenity, so public and noisy, like a parade of riches, was loathsome to Julio. "There is nothing like this in Paris," his cousins repeatedly exulted as they admired the stupendous salons, the hundreds of men and women in pairs, the thousands of tipplers. "No, there certainly was nothing like that in Paris." He was sick of such boundless pretension. He seemed to be attending a fiesta of hungry mariners anxious at one swoop to make amends for all former privations. Like his father, he longed to get away. It offended his aesthetic sense.

Don Marcelo returned from this visit with melancholy resignation. Those people had undoubtedly made great strides. He was not such a blind patriot that he could not admit what was so evident. Within a few years they had transformed their country, and their industry was astonishing . . . but, well . . . it was simply impossible to have anything to do with them. Each to his own, but may they never take a notion to envy their neighbor! . . . Then he immediately repelled this last suspicion with the optimism of a business man.

"They are going to be very rich," he thought. "Their affairs are prospering, and he that is rich does not hunt quarrels. That war of which some crazy fools are always dreaming would be an impossible thing."

Young Desnoyers renewed his Parisian existence, living entirely in the studio and going less and less to his father's home. Dona Luisa began to speak of a certain Argensola, a very learned young Spaniard, believing that his counsels might prove most helpful to Julio. She did not know exactly whether this new companion was friend, master or servant. The studio habitues also had their doubts. The literary ones always spoke of Argensola as a painter. The painters recognized only his ability as a man of letters. He was among those who used to come up to the studio of winter afternoons, attracted by the ruddy glow of the stove and the wines secretly provided by the mother, holding forth authoritatively before the often-renewed bottle and the box of cigars lying open on the table. One night, he slept on the divan, as he had no regular quarters. After that first night, he lived entirely in the studio.

Julio soon discovered in him an admirable reflex of his own personality. He knew that Argensola had come third-class from Madrid with twenty francs in his pocket, in order to "capture glory," to use his own words. Upon observing that the Spaniard was painting with as much difficulty as himself, with the same wooden and childish strokes, which are so characteristic of the make-believe artists and pot-boilers, the routine workers concerned themselves with color and other rank fads. Argensola was a psychological artist, a painter of souls. And his disciple, felt astonished and almost displeased on learning what a comparatively simple thing it was to paint a soul. Upon a bloodless countenance, with a chin as sharp as a dagger, the gifted Spaniard would trace a pair of nearly round eyes, and at the centre of each pupil he would aim a white brush stroke, a point of light . . . the soul. Then, planting himself before the canvas, he would proceed to classify this soul with his inexhaustible imagination, attributing to it almost every kind of stress and extremity. So great was the sway of his rapture that Julio, too, was able to see all that the artist flattered himself into believing that he had put into the owlish eyes. He, also, would paint souls . . . souls of women.

In spite of the ease with which he developed his psychological creations, Argensola preferred to talk, stretched on a divan, or to read, hugging the fire while his friend and protector was outside. Another advantage this fondness for reading gave young Desnoyers was that he was no longer obliged to open a volume, scanning the index and last pages "just to get the idea." Formerly when frequenting society functions, he had been guilty of coolly asking an author which was his best book—his smile of a clever man—giving the writer to understand that he merely enquired so as not to waste time on the other volumes. Now it was no longer necessary to do this; Argensola would read for him. As

soon as Julio would see him absorbed in a book, he would demand an immediate share: "Tell me the story." So the "secretary," not only gave him the plots of comedies and novels, but also detailed the argument of Schopenhauer or of Nietzsche . . . Dona Luisa almost wept on hearing her visitors—with that benevolence which wealth always inspires—speak of her son as "a rather gay young man, but wonderfully well read!"

In exchange for his lessons, Argensola received, much the same treatment as did the Greek slaves who taught rhetoric to the young patricians of decadent Rome. In the midst of a dissertation, his lord and friend would interrupt him with—"Get my dress suit ready. I am invited out this evening."

At other times, when the instructor was luxuriating in bodily comfort, with a book in one hand near the roaring stove, seeing through the windows the gray and rainy afternoon, his disciple would suddenly appear saying, "Quick, get out! . . . There's a woman coming!"

And Argensola, like a dog who gets up and shakes himself, would disappear to continue his reading in some miserable little coffee house in the neighborhood.

In his official capacity, this widely gifted man often descended from the peaks of intellectuality to the vulgarities of everyday life. He was the steward of the lord of the manor, the intermediary between the pocketbook and those who appeared bill in hand. "Money!" he would say laconically at the end of the month, and Desnoyers would break out into complaints and curses. Where on earth was he to get it, he would like to know. His father was as regular as a machine, and would never allow the slightest advance upon the following month. He had to submit to a rule of misery. Three thousand francs a month!—what could any decent person do with that? . . . He was even trying to cut THAT down, to tighten the band, interfering in the running of his house, so that Dona Luisa could not make presents to her son. In vain he had appealed to the various usurers of Paris, telling them of his property beyond the ocean. These gentlemen had the youth of their own country in the hollow of their hand and were not obliged to risk their capital in other lands. The same hard luck pursued him when, with sudden demonstrations of affection, he had tried to convince Don Marcelo that three thousand francs a month was but a niggardly trifle.

The millionaire fairly snorted with indignation. "Three thousand francs a trifle!" And the debts besides, that he often had to pay for his son! . . .

"Why, when I was your age," . . . he would begin saying—but Julio would suddenly bring the dialogue to a close. He had heard his father's story too many times. Ah, the stingy old miser! What he had been giving him all these months was no more than the interest on his grandfather's legacy. . . . And by the advice of Argensola he ventured to get control of the field. He was planning to hand over the management of his land to Celedonio, the old overseer, who was now such a grandee in his country that Julio ironically called him "my uncle."

Desnoyers accepted this rebellion coldly. "It appears just to me. You are now of age!" Then he promptly reduced to extremes his oversight of his home, forbidding Dona Luisa to handle any money. Henceforth he regarded his son as an adversary, treating him during his lightning apparitions at the avenue Victor Hugo with glacial courtesy as though he were a stranger.

For a while a transitory opulence enlivened the studio. Julio had increased his expenses, considering himself rich. But the letters from his uncle in America soon dissipated these illusions. At first the remittances exceeded very slightly the monthly allowance that his father had made him. Then it began to diminish in an alarming manner. According to Celedonio, all the calamities on earth seemed to be falling upon his plantation. The pasture land was yielding scantily, sometimes for lack of rain, sometimes because of floods, and the herds were perishing by hundreds. Julio required more income, and the crafty half-breed sent him what he asked for, but simply as a loan, reserving the return until they should adjust their accounts.

In spite of such aid, young Desnoyers was suffering great want. He was gambling now in an elegant circle, thinking thus to compensate for his periodical scrimpings; but this resort was only

making the remittances from America disappear with greater rapidity. . . . That such a man as he was should be tormented so for the lack of a few thousand francs! What else was a millionaire father for?

If the creditors began threatening, the poor youth had to bring the secretary into play, ordering him to see the mother immediately; he himself wished to avoid her tears and reproaches. So Argensola would slip like a pickpocket up the service stairway of the great house on the avenue Victor Hugo. The place in which he transacted his ambassadorial business was the kitchen, with great danger that the terrible Desnoyers might happen in there, on one of his perambulations as a laboring man, and surprise the intruder.

Dona Luisa would weep, touched by the heartrending tales of the messenger. What could she do! She was as poor as her maids; she had jewels, many jewels, but not a franc. Then Argensola came to the rescue with a solution worthy of his experience. He would smooth the way for the good mother, leaving some of her jewels at the Mont-de-Piete. He knew the way to raise money on them. So the lady accepted his advice, giving him, however, only jewels of medium value as she suspected that she might never see them again. Later scruples made her at times refuse flatly. Suppose Don Marcelo should ever find it out, what a scene! . . . But the Spaniard deemed it unseemly to return empty-handed, and always bore away a basket of bottles from the well-stocked wine-cellar of the Desnoyers.

Every morning Dona Luisa went to Saint-Honore-d'Eylau to pray for her son. She felt that this was her own church. It was a hospitable and familiar island in the unexplored ocean of Paris. Here she could exchange discreet salutations with her neighbors from the different republics of the new world. She felt nearer to God and the saints when she could hear in the vestibule conversations in her language.

It was, moreover, a sort of salon in which took place the great events of the South American colony. One day was a wedding with flowers, orchestra and chanting chorals. With Chichi beside her, she greeted those she knew, congratulating the bride and groom. Another day it was the funeral of an ex-president of some republic, or some other foreign dignitary ending in Paris his turbulent existence. Poor President! Poor General! . . .

Dona Luisa remembered the dead man. She had seen him many times in that church devoutly attending mass and she was indignant at the evil tongues which, under the cover of a funeral oration, recalled the shootings and bank failures in his country. Such a good and religious gentleman! May God receive his soul in glory! . . . And upon going out into the square, she would look with tender eyes upon the young men and women on horseback going to the Bois de Boulogne, the luxurious automobiles, the morning radiant in the sunshine, all the primeval freshness of the early hours—realizing what a beautiful thing it is to live.

Her devout expression of gratitude for mere existence usually included the monument in the centre of the square, all bristling with wings as if about to fly away from the ground. Victor Hugo! . . . It was enough for her to have heard this name on the lips of her son to make her contemplate the statue with a family interest. The only thing that she knew about the poet was that he had died. Of this she was almost sure, and she imagined that in life, he was a great friend of Julio's because she had so often heard her son repeat his name.

Ay, her son! . . . All her thoughts, her conjectures, her desires, converged on him and her strong-willed husband. She longed for the men to come to an understanding and put an end to a struggle in which she was the principal victim. Would not God work this miracle? . . . Like an invalid who goes from one sanitarium to another in pursuit of health, she gave up the church on her street to attend the Spanish chapel on the avenue Friedland. Here she considered herself even more among her own.

In the midst of the fine and elegant South American ladies who looked as if they had just escaped from a fashion sheet, her eyes sought other women, not so well dressed, fat, with theatrical ermine and antique jewelry. When these high-born dames met each other in the vestibule, they spoke with heavy voices and expressive gestures, emphasizing their words energetically. The daughter of the ranch ventured to salute them because she had subscribed to all their pet charities, and upon seeing her

greeting returned, she felt a satisfaction which made her momentarily forget her woes. They belonged to those families which her father had so greatly admired without knowing why. They came from the "mother country," and to the good Chicha were all Excelentisimas or Altisimas, related to kings. She did not know whether to give them her hand or bend the knee, as she had vaguely heard was the custom at court. But soon she recalled her preoccupation and went forward to wrestle in prayer with God. Ay, that he would mercifully remember her! That he would not long forget her son! . . .

It was Glory that remembered Julio, stretching out to him her arms of light, so that he suddenly awoke to find himself surrounded by all the honors and advantages of celebrity. Fame cunningly surprises mankind on the most crooked and unexpected of roads. Neither the painting of souls nor a fitful existence full of extravagant love affairs and complicated duels had brought Desnoyers this renown. It was Glory that put him on his feet.

A new pleasure for the delight of humanity had come from the other side of the seas. People were asking one another in the mysterious tones of the initiated who wish to recognize a familiar spirit, "Do you know how to tango? . . ." The tango had taken possession of the world. It was the heroic hymn of a humanity that was suddenly concentrating its aspirations on the harmonious rhythm of the thigh joints, measuring its intelligence by the agility of its feet. An incoherent and monotonous music of African inspiration was satisfying the artistic ideals of a society that required nothing better. The world was dancing . . . dancing . . . dancing.

A negro dance from Cuba introduced into South America by mariners who shipped jerked beef to the Antilles, conquered the entire earth in a few months, completely encircling it, bounding victoriously from nation to nation . . . like the Marseillaise. It was even penetrating into the most ceremonious courts, overturning all traditions of conservation and etiquette like a song of the Revolution—the revolution of frivolity. The Pope even had to become a master of the dance, recommending the "Furlana" instead of the "Tango," since all the Christian world, regardless of sects, was united in the common desire to agitate its feet with the tireless frenzy of the "possessed" of the Middle Ages.

Julio Desnoyers, upon meeting this dance of his childhood in full swing in Paris, devoted himself to it with the confidence that an old love inspires. Who could have foretold that when as a student, he was frequenting the lowest dance halls in Buenos Aires, watched by the police, that he was really serving an apprenticeship to Glory? . . .

From five to seven, in the salons of the Champs d'Elysees where it cost five francs for a cup of tea and the privilege of joining in the sacred dance, hundreds of eyes followed him with admiration. "He has the key," said the women, appraising his slender elegance, medium stature, and muscular springs. And he, in abbreviated jacket and expansive shirt bosom, with his small, girlish feet encased in high-heeled patent leathers with white tops, danced gravely, thoughtfully, silently, like a mathematician working out a problem, under the lights that shed bluish tones upon his plastered, glossy locks. Ladies asked to be presented to him in the sweet hope that their friends might envy them when they beheld them in the arms of the master. Invitations simply rained upon Julio. The most exclusive salons were thrown open to him so that every afternoon he made a dozen new acquaintances. The fashion had brought over professors from the other side of the sea, compatriots from the slums of Buenos Aires, haughty and confused at being applauded like famous lecturers or tenors; but Julio triumphed over these vulgarians who danced for money, and the incidents of his former life were considered by the women as deeds of romantic gallantry.

"You are killing yourself," Argensola would say. "You are dancing too much."

The glory of his friend and master was only making more trouble for him. His placid readings before the fire were now subject to daily interruptions. It was impossible to read more than a chapter. The celebrated man was continually ordering him to betake himself to the street. "A new lesson," sighed the parasite. And when he was alone in the studio numerous callers—all women, some

inquisitive and aggressive, others sad, with a deserted air—were constantly interrupting his thoughtful pursuits.

One of them terrified the occupants of the studio with her insistence. She was a North American of uncertain age, somewhere between thirty-two and fifty-nine, with short skirts that whenever she sat down, seemed to fly up as if moved by a spring. Various dances with Desnoyers and a visit to the rue de la Pompe she seemed to consider as her sacred rights, and she pursued the master with the desperation of an abandoned zealot. Julio had made good his escape upon learning that this beauty of youthful elegance—when seen from the back—had two grandchildren. "MASTER Desnoyers has gone out," Argensola would invariably say upon receiving her. And, thereupon she would burst into tears and threats, longing to kill herself then and there that her corpse might frighten away those other women who would come to rob her of what she considered her special privilege. Now it was Argensola who sped his companion to the street when he wished to be alone. He had only to remark casually, "I believe that Yankee is coming," and the great man would beat a hasty retreat, oftentimes in his desperate flight availing himself of the back stairs.

At this time began to develop the most important event in Julio's existence. The Desnoyers family was to be united with that of Senator Lacour. Rene, his only son, had succeeded in awakening in Chichi a certain interest that was almost love. The dignitary enjoyed thinking of his son allied to the boundless plains and immense herds whose description always affected him like a marvellous tale. He was a widower, but he enjoyed giving at his home famous banquets and parties. Every new celebrity immediately suggested to him the idea of giving a dinner. No illustrious person passing through Paris, polar explorer or famous singer, could escape being exhibited in the dining room of Lacour. The son of Desnoyers—at whom he had scarcely glanced before—now inspired him with sudden interest. The senator was a thoroughly up-to-date man who did not classify glory nor distinguish reputations. It was enough for him that a name should be on everybody's lips for him to accept it with enthusiasm. When Julio responded to his invitation, he presented him with pride to his friends, and came very near to calling him "dear master." The tango was monopolizing all conversation nowadays. Even in the Academy they were taking it up in order to demonstrate that the youth of ancient Athens had diverted itself in a somewhat similar way. . . . And Lacour had dreamed all his life of an Athenian republic.

At these reunions, Desnoyers became acquainted with the Lauriers. He was an engineer who owned a motor-factory for automobiles in the outskirts of Paris—a man about thirty-five, tall, rather heavy and silent, with a deliberate air as though he wished to see deeply into men and things. She was of a light, frivolous character, loving life for the satisfactions and pleasures which it brought her, appearing to accept with smiling conformity the silent and grave adoration of her husband. She could not well do less with a man of his merits. Besides, she had brought to the marriage a dowry of three hundred thousand francs, a capital which had enabled the engineer to enlarge his business. The senator had been instrumental in arranging this marriage. He was interested in Laurier because he was the son of an old friend.

Upon Marguerite Laurier the presence of Julio flashed like a ray of sunlight in the tiresome salon of Lacour. She was dancing the fad of the hour and frequenting the tango teas where reigned the adored Desnoyers. And to think that she was being entertained with this celebrated and interesting man that the other women were raving about! . . . In order that he might not take her for a mere middle-class woman like the other guests at the senator's party, she spoke of her modistes, all from the rue de la Paix, declaring gravely that no woman who had any self-respect could possibly walk through the streets wearing a gown costing less than eight hundred francs, and that the hat of a thousand francs —but a few years ago, an astonishing novelty—was nowadays a very ordinary affair.

This acquaintanceship made the "little Laurier," as her friends called her notwithstanding her tallness, much sought by the master of the dance, in spite of the looks of wrath and envy hurled at her by the others. What a triumph for the wife of a simple engineer who was used to going everywhere in her mother's automobile! . . . Julio at first had supposed her like all the others who were languishing

in his arms, following the rhythmic complications of the dance, but he soon found that she was very different. Her coquetry after the first confidential words, but increased his admiration. He really had never before been thrown with a woman of her class. Those of his first social period were the habituees of the night restaurants paid for their witchery. Now Glory was tossing into his arms ladies of high position but with an unconfessable past, anxious for novelties although exceedingly mature. This middle class woman who would advance so confidently toward him and then retreat with such capricious outbursts of modesty, was a new type for him.

The tango salons soon began to suffer a great loss. Desnoyers was permitting himself to be seen there with less frequency, handing Glory over to the professionals. Sometimes entire weeks slipped by without the five-to-seven devotees being able to admire his black locks and his tiny patent leathers twinkling under the lights in time with his graceful movements.

Marguerite was also avoiding these places. The meetings of the two were taking place in accordance with what she had read in the love stories of Paris. She was going in search of Julio, fearing to be recognized, tremulous with emotion, selecting her most inconspicuous suit, and covering her face with a close veil—"the veil of adultery," as her friends called it. They had their trysts in the least-frequented squares of the district, frequently changing the places, like timid birds that at the slightest disturbance fly to perch a little further away. Sometimes they would meet in the Buttes Chaumont, at others they preferred the gardens on the left bank of the Seine, the Luxembourg, and even the distant Parc de Montsouris. She was always in tremors of terror lest her husband might surprise them, although she well knew that the industrious engineer was in his factory a great distance away. Her agitated aspect, her excessive precautions in order to slip by unseen, only served to attract the attention of the passers-by. Although Julio was waxing impatient with the annoyance of this wandering love affair which only amounted to a few fugitive kisses, he finally held his peace, dominated by Marguerite's pleadings.

She did not wish merely to be one in the procession of his sweethearts; it was necessary to convince herself first that this love was going to last forever. It was her first slip and she wanted it to be the last. Ay, her former spotless reputation! . . . What would people say! . . . The two returned to their adolescent period, loving each other as they had never loved before, with the confident and childish passion of fifteen-year-olds.

Julio had leaped from childhood to libertinism, taking his initiation into life at a single bound. She had desired marriage in order to acquire the respect and liberty of a married woman, but feeling towards her husband only a vague gratitude. "We end where others begin," she had said to Desnoyers.

Their passion took the form of an intense, reciprocal and vulgar love. They felt a romantic sentimentality in clasping hands or exchanging kisses on a garden bench in the twilight. He was treasuring a ringlet of Marguerite's—although he doubted its genuineness, with a vague suspicion that it might be one of the latest wisps of fashion. She would cuddle down with her head on his shoulder, as though imploring his protection, although always in the open air. If Julio ever attempted greater intimacy in a carriage, madame would repel him most vigorously. A contradictory duality appeared to inspire her actions. Every morning, on awaking, she would decide to yield, but then when near him, her middle-class respectability, jealous of its reputation, kept her faithful to her mother's teachings.

One day she agreed to visit his studio with the interest that the haunts of the loved one always inspires. "Promise that you will not take advantage of me." He readily promised, swearing that everything should be as Marguerite wished. . . . But from that day they were no longer seen in the gardens, nor wandering around persecuted by the winter winds. They preferred the studio, and Argensola had to rearrange his existence, seeking the stove of another artist friend, in order to continue his reading.

This state of things lasted two months. They never knew what secret force suddenly disturbed their tranquility. Perhaps one of her friends, guessing at the truth, had told the husband anonymously. Perhaps it was she herself unconsciously, with her inexpressible happiness, her tardy returns home

when dinner was already served, and the sudden aversion which she showed toward the engineer in their hours alone, trying to keep her heart faithful to her lover. To divide her interest between her legal companion and the man she loved was a torment that her simple and vehement enthusiasm could not tolerate.

While she was hurrying one night through the rue de la Pompe, looking at her watch and trembling with impatience at not finding an automobile or even a cab, a man stood in front of her. . . . Etienne Laurier! She always shuddered with fear on recalling that hour. For a moment she believed that he was going to kill her. Serious men, quiet and diffident, are most terrible in their explosions of wrath. Her husband knew everything. With the same patience that he employed in solving his industrial problems, he had been studying her day by day, without her ever suspecting the watchfulness behind that impassive countenance. Then he had followed her in order to complete the evidence of his misfortune.

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