

**BLASCO
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THE SHADOW OF THE
CATHEDRAL

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The Shadow of the Cathedral:

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Vicente Blasco Ibañez

The Shadow of the Cathedral

INTRODUCTION

There are three cathedrals which I think will remain chief of the Spanish cathedrals in the remembrance of the traveller, namely the Cathedral at Burgos, the Cathedral at Toledo, and the Cathedral at Seville; and first of these for reasons hitherto of history and art, and now of fiction, will be the Cathedral at Toledo, which the most commanding talent among the contemporary Spanish novelists has made the protagonist of the romance following. I do not mean that Vincent Blasco Ibañez is greater than Perez Galdós, or Armando Palacio Valdés or even the Countess Pardo-Bazan; but he belongs to their realistic order of imagination, and he is easily the first of living European novelists outside of Spain, with the advantage of superior youth, freshness of invention and force of characterization. The Russians have ceased to be actively the masters, and there is no Frenchman, Englishman, or Scandinavian who counts with Ibañez, and of course no Italian, American, and, unspeakably, no German.

I scarcely know whether to speak first of this book or the writer of it, but as I know less of him than of it I may more

quickly dispatch that part of my introduction. He was born at Valencia in 1866, of Arragonese origin, and of a strictly middle class family. His father kept a shop, a dry-goods store in fact, but Ibañez, after fit preparation, studied law in the University of Valencia and was duly graduated in that science. Apparently he never practiced his profession, but became a journalist almost immediately. He was instinctively a revolutionist, and was imprisoned in Barcelona, the home of revolution, for some political offence, when he was eighteen. It does not appear whether he committed his popular offence in the Republican newspaper which he established in Valencia; but it is certain that he was elected a Republican deputy to the Cortes, where he became a leader of his party, while yet evidently of no great maturity.

He began almost as soon to write fiction of the naturalistic type, and of a Zolaistic coloring which his Spanish critics find rather stronger than I have myself seen it. Every young writer forms himself upon some older writer; nobody begins master; but Ibañez became master while he was yet no doubt practicing a prentice hand; yet I do not feel very strongly the Zolaistic influence in his first novel, *La Barraca*, or *The Cabin*, which paints peasant life in the region of Valencia, studied at first hand and probably from personal knowledge. It is not a very spacious scheme, but in its narrow field it is strictly a *novela de costumbres*, or novel of manners, as we used to call the kind. Ibañez has in fact never written anything but novels of manners, and *La Barraca*

pictures a neighborhood where a stranger takes up a waste tract of land and tries to make a home for himself and family. This makes enemies of all his neighbors who after an interval of pity for the newcomer in the loss of one of his children return to their cruelty and render the place impossible to him. It is a tragedy such as naturalism alone can stage and give the effect of life. I have read few things so touching as this tale of commonest experience which seems as true to the suffering and defeat of the newcomers, as to the stupid inhumanity of the neighbors who join, under the lead of the evillest among them, in driving the strangers away; in fact I know nothing parallel to it, certainly nothing in English; perhaps *The House with the Green Shutters* breathes as great an anguish.

At just what interval or remove the novel which gave Ibañez worldwide reputation followed this little tale, I cannot say, and it is not important that I should try to say. But it is worth while to note here that he never flatters the vices or even the swoier virtues of his countrymen; and it is much to their honor that they have accepted him in the love of his art for the sincerity of his dealing with their conditions. In *Sangre y Arena* his affair is with the cherished atrocity which keeps the Spaniards in the era of the gladiator shows of Rome. The hero, as the renowned *torrero* whose career it celebrates, from his first boyish longing to be a bull-fighter, to his death, weakened by years and wounds, in the arena of Madrid, is something absolute in characterization. The whole book in fact is absolute in its fidelity to the general

fact it deals with, and the persons of its powerful drama. Each in his or her place is realized with an art which leaves one in no doubt of their lifelikeness, and keeps each as vital as the *torrero* himself. There is little of the humor which relieves the pathos of Valdés in the equal fidelity of his *Marta y Maria* or the unsurpassable tragedy of Galdós in his *Doña Perfecta*. The *torrero's* family who have dreaded his boyish ambition with the anxiety of good common people, and his devotedly gentle and beautiful wife,—even his bullying and then truckling brother-in-law who is ashamed of his profession and then proud of him when it has filled Spain with his fame,—are made to live in the spacious scene. But above all in her lust for him and her contempt for him the unique figure of Doña Sol astounds. She rules him as her brother the marquis would rule a mistress; even in the abandon of her passion she does not admit him to social equality; she will not let him speak to her in thee and thou, he must address her as ladyship; she is monstrous without ceasing to be a woman of her world, when he dies before her in the arena a broken and vanquished man. The *torrero* is morally better than the aristocrat and he is none the less human though a mere incident of her wicked life,—her insulted and rejected worshipper, who yet deserves his fate.

Sangre y Arena is a book of unexampled force and in that sort must be reckoned the greatest novel of the author, who has neglected no phase of his varied scene. The *torrero's* mortal disaster in the arena is no more important than the action behind

the scenes where the gored horses have their dangling entrails sewed up by the primitive surgery of the place and are then ridden back into the amphitheatre to suffer a second agony. No color of the dreadful picture is spared; the whole thing passes as in the reader's presence before his sight and his other senses. The book is a masterpiece far in advance of that study of the common life which Ibañez calls *La Horda*; dealing with the horde of common poor and those accidents of beauty and talent as native to them as to the classes called the better. It has the attraction of the author's frank handling, and the power of the Spanish scene in which the action passes; but it could not hold me to the end.

It is only in his latest book that he transcends the Spanish scene and peoples the wider range from South America to Paris, and from Paris to the invaded provinces of France with characters proper to the times and places. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* has not the rough textures and rank dyes of the wholly Spanish stories, but it is the strongest story of the great war known to me, and its loss in the Parisian figures is made more than good in the novelty and veracity of the Argentinos who supply that element of internationality which the North American novelists of a generation ago employed to give a fresh interest to their work. With the coming of the hero to study art and make love in the conventional Paris, and the repatriation of his father, a cattle millionaire of French birth from the pampas, with his wife and daughters, Ibañez achieves effects beyond the art of Henry James, below whom he nevertheless falls so far in

subtlety and beauty.

The book has moments of the pathos so rich in the work of Galdós and Valdés, and especially of Emilia Pardo-Bazan in her *Morriña* or *Home Sickness*, the story of a peasant girl in Barcelona, but the grief of the Argentine family for the death of the son and brother in battle with the Germans, has the appeal of anguish beyond any moment in *La Catedral*. I do not know just the order of this last-mentioned novel among the stories of Ibañez, but it has a quality of imagination, of poetic feeling which surpasses the invention of any other that I have read, and makes me think it came before *Sangre y Arena*, and possibly before *La Horda*. I cannot recall any other novel of the author which is quite so psychological as this. It is in fact a sort of biography, a personal study, of the mighty fane at Toledo, as if the edifice were of human quality and could have its life expressed in human terms. There is nothing forced in the poetic conception, or mechanical in the execution. The Cathedral is not only a single life, it is a neighborhood, a city, a world in itself; and its complex character appears in the nature of the different souls which collectively animate it. The first of these is the sick and beaten native of it who comes back to the world which he has never loved or trusted, but in which he was born and reared. As a son of its faith, Gabriel Luna was to have been a priest; but before he became a minister of its faith, it meant almost the same that he should become a Carlist soldier, and fight on for that cause till it was hopeless. In his French captivity he loses the faith which was one with the

Carlist cause, and in England he reads Darwin and becomes an evolutionist of the ardor which the evolutionists have now lost. He wanders over Europe with the English girl whom he worships with an intellectual rather than passionate ardor, and after her death he ends at Barcelona in time to share one of the habitual revolutions of the province and to spend several years in one of its prisons. When he comes out it is into a world which he is doomed to leave; he is sick to death and in hopeless poverty; he has lost the courage of his revolutionary faith if not his fealty to it; all that he asks of the world is leave to creep out of it and somewhere die in peace. He thinks of an elder brother who like himself was born in the precincts of the Cathedral where generations of their family have lived and died, and his brother does not deny him. In fact the kind, dull gardener welcomes him to a share of his poverty, and Gabriel begins dying where he began living. The kindness between the brothers is as simple in the broken adventurer whose wide world has failed him as in the aging peasant, pent from his birth in the Cathedral close, with no knowledge of anything beyond it. All their kindred who serve in their several sort the stepmother church, down to the gardener's son whose office is to keep dogs out of the Cathedral and has the title of *perrero*, are good to the returning exile. They do not well understand what and where he has been; the tradition of his gifted youth when he was dedicated to the church and forsook her service at the altar for her service in the field, remains unquestioned, and he is safe in the refuge of his family who can offer mainly

their insignificance for his protection. The logic of the fact is perfect, and Gabriel's emergence from the quiet of his retreat inevitably follows from the nature of the agitator as the logic of his own past and has the approval at least of the *perrero* and the allegiance of the rest. What is very important in the affair is that most of the inhabitants of this Cathedral-world, rich and poor, good, bad, and indifferent, mean and generous, are few of them wicked people, as wickedness is commonly understood; they all have their habitual or their occasional moments of good will.

The refugee is tired of his past but he does not deny his faith in humanity; his doctrine only postpones to a time secularly remote the redemption of humanity from its secular suffering. He begins at once to do good; he rescues his kind elder brother from the repudiation of the daughter whom he has cast off because her seduction has condemned her to a life of shame; he wins back the poor prostitute to her home, and forces her father to tolerate her in it.

Most of the Cathedral folk are of course miserably poor, but willing to be better than they are if they can keep from starving; the fierce and prepotent Cardinal who is over them all, has moments of the common good will, when he forgives all his enemies except the recalcitrant canons. He likes to escape from these, and talk with the elderly widow of the gardener whom he has known from his boyhood, and to pity himself in her presence and smoke himself free from, his rancor and trouble. He is such a prelate as we know historically in enough instances; but he

is pathetic in that simplicity which survives in him and almost makes good the loss of innocence in Latin souls. He keeps with him the young girl who is the daughter of his youth, and whom it cuts him to the soul to have those opprobrious canons imagine his mistress. He is one out of the many figures that affirm their veracity in the strange world where they have their being; and he is only the more vivid as the head of a hierarchy which he rules rather violently though never ignobly.

But the populace, the underpaid domestics and laborers of the strange ecclesiastical world in their wretched over-worked lives and hopeless deaths are what the author presents most vividly. There is the death of the cobbler's baby which starves at the starving mother's breast which the author makes us witness in its insupportable pathos, but his art is not chiefly shown in such extremes: his affair includes the whole tragical drama of the place, both its beauty and its squalor of fact, but he keeps central the character of the refugee, Gabriel Luna, in the allegiance to his past which he cannot throw off. When he begins to teach the simple denizens of the Cathedral, some of them hear him gladly, and some indifferently, and some unwillingly, but none intelligently. He fails with them in that doctrine of patience which was his failure, as an agitator, with the proletariat wherever he has been; they could not wait through geological epochs for the reign of mercy and justice which he could not reasonably promise the over-worked and underfed multitude to-morrow or the day after. His brother, who could not accept his teachings, warns him that

the people of the Cathedral will not understand him and cannot accept his scientific gospel, and for a while he desists. In fact he takes service in the ceremonial of the Cathedral; he even plays a mechanical part in the procession of Corpus Christi, and finally he becomes one of the night-watchmen who guard the temple from the burglaries always threatening its treasures.

The story is quite without the love-interest which is the prime attraction of our mostly silly fiction. Gabriel's association with the English girl who wanders over Europe with him is scarcely passionate if it is not altogether platonic; his affection for the poor girl for whom he has won her father's tolerance if not forgiveness becomes a tender affection, but not possibly more; and there is as little dramatic incident as love interest in the book. The extraordinary power of it lies in its fealty to the truth and its insight into human nature. The reader of course perceives that it is intensely anti-ecclesiastical, but he could make no greater mistake than to imagine it in any wise Protestant. The author shares this hate or slight of ecclesiasticism with all the Spanish novelists, so far as I know them; most notably with Perez Galdós in *Doña Perfecta* and *Lean Rich*, with Pardo-Bazan in several of her stories, with Palacio Valdés in the less measure of *Marta y Maria*, and *La Hermana de San Sulpicio* and even with the romanticist Valera in *Pepita Jimenez*. But it may be said that while Ibañez does not go any farther than Galdós, for instance, he is yet more intensively agnostic. He is the standard bearer of the scientific revolt in the terms of fiction which spares us no hope

of relief in the religious notion of human life here or hereafter that the Hebraic or Christian theology has divined.

It is right to say this plainly, but the reader who can suffer it from the author will find his book one of the fullest and richest in modern fiction, worthy to rank with the greatest Russian work and beyond anything yet done in English. It has not the topographical range of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or *Resurrection*; but in its climax it is as logically and ruthlessly tragical as anything that the Spanish spirit has yet imagined.

Whoever can hold on to the end of it will find his reward in the full enjoyment of that "noble terror" which high tragedy alone can give. Nothing that happens in the solemn story—in which something significant is almost always happening—is of the supreme effect of the socialist agitator's death at the hands of the disciples whom he has taught to expect mercy and justice on earth, but forbidden to expect it within the reach of the longest life of any man or race of men. His rebellious followers come at night into the Cathedral where Gabriel is watching, to rob an especially rich Madonna, whom he has taught them to regard as a senseless and wasteful idol, and they will not hear him when he pleads with them against the theft. The inevitable irony of the event is awful, but it is not cruel, rather it is the supreme touch of that pathos which seems the crowning motive of the book.

W.D. HOWELLS.

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THE SHADOW OF THE CATHEDRAL

CHAPTER I

The dawn was just rising when Gabriel Luna arrived in front of the Cathedral, but in the narrow street of Toledo it was still night. The silvery morning light that had scarcely begun to touch the eaves and roofs, spread out more freely in the little Piazza del Ayuntamiento, bringing out of the shadows the ugly front of the Archbishop's Palace, and the towers of the municipal buildings capped with black slate, a sombre erection of the time of Charles V.

Gabriel walked for some time up and down the deserted square, wrapping himself up to his eyes in the muffler of his cloak, while at intervals his hollow cough shook him painfully. Without daring to stop walking on account of the bitter cold, he looked at the great doorway called "del Perdon," the only part of the church able to present a really imposing aspect. He recalled other famous cathedrals, isolated, occupying commanding situations, showing themselves freely in the full pride of their beauty, and he compared them with this Cathedral of Toledo, the mother-church of Spain, smothered by the

swarm of poverty-stricken buildings that surrounded it, clinging closely to its walls, permitting it to display none of its exterior beauties, beyond what could be seen from the narrow streets that closed it in on every side. Gabriel, who was acquainted with its interior magnificence, thought of the deceptive oriental houses, outwardly squalid and miserable, but inwardly rich in alabasters and traceries. Jews and Moors had not lived in Toledo for centuries in vain, their aversion to outward show seemed to have influenced the building of the Cathedral, now suffocated by the miserable hovels, pushed and piled up against it, as though seeking its protection.

The little Piazza del Ayuntamiento was the only open space that allowed the Christian monument to display any of its grandeur; under this little patch of open sky the early morning light showed the three immense Gothic arches of its principal front, the hugely massive bell tower, with its salient angles, ornamented by the cap of the Alcuzon, a sort of black tiara, with three crowns, almost lost in the grey mist of the wintry dawn.

Gabriel looked affectionately at the closed and silent fane, where his family lived, and where he himself had spent the happiest days of his life. How many years had passed since he had last seen it! And now he waited anxiously for the opening of its doorways.

He had arrived in Toledo by train the previous night from Madrid. Before shutting himself up in his miserable little room in the Posada del Sangre (the ancient Messon del Sevillano,

inhabited by Cervantes) he had felt a feverish desire to revisit the Cathedral, and had spent nearly an hour walking round it, listening to the barking of the Cathedral watch-dog, who growled suspiciously, hearing the sound of footsteps in the surrounding streets. He had been unable to sleep; the fact of returning to his native town after so many years of misery and adventures had taken from him all desire to rest, and, while it was still night, he again stole out to await near the Cathedral the moment that it should be opened.

To while away the time he paced up and down the front, admiring again the beauties of the porch, and noting its defects aloud, as though he wished to call the stone benches of the Piazza and its wretched little trees as witnesses to his criticisms.

An iron grating surmounted by urns of the seventeenth century ran in front of the porch, enclosing a wide, flagged space, where in former times the sumptuous processions of the Chapter had assembled, and where the multitude could admire the grotesque giants on high days and festivals.

The first storey of the façade was broken in the centre by the great Puerta del Perdon, an enormous and very deeply-recessed Gothic arch, which narrowed as it receded by the gradations of its mouldings, adorned by statues of apostles, under open-worked canopies, and by shields emblazoned with lions and castles. On the pillar dividing the doorway stood Jesus in kingly crown and mantle, thin and drawn out, with the look of emaciation and misery that the imagination of the Middle Ages

conceived necessary for the expression of Divine sublimity. In the tympanum a relieve represented the Virgin surrounded by angels, robed in the habit of St. Ildefonso, a pious legend repeated in various parts of the building as though it were one of its chief glories.

On one side was the doorway called "de la Torre,"¹ on the other side that called "de los Escribanos,"² for by it entered in former days the guardians of public religion to take the oath to fulfil the duties of their office. Both were enriched with stone statues on the jambs, and by wreaths of little figures, foliage, and emblems that unrolled themselves among the mouldings till they met at the summit of the arch.

Above these three doorways with their exuberant Gothic rose the second storey of Greco-Romano and almost modern construction, causing Gabriel the same annoyance as would a discordant trumpet interrupting a symphony. Jesus and the twelve apostles, all life size, seated at the table, each under his own canopied niche, could be seen above the central porch, shut in by the two tower-like buttresses which divided the front into three parts. Beyond, two rows of arcades of inferior design, belonging to the Italian palace, extended as far as those under which Gabriel had so often played as a child when living in the house of the bell-ringer.

The riches of the Church, thought Luna, were a misfortune

¹ Of the Tower.

² Of the Scribes.

for art; in a poorer church the uniformity of the ancient front would have been preserved. But, then, the Archbishop of Toledo had eleven millions of yearly revenue, and the Chapter as many more; they did not know what to do with their money, so started works and made reconstructions, and the decadent art produced monstrosities like that one of the Last Supper.

Above, again, rose the third storey, two great arches that lighted the large rose of the central nave. The whole was crowned by a balustrade of open-worked stone following the sinuosities of the frontage, between the two salient masses that guarded it, the tower and the Musarabé chapel.

Gabriel ceased his contemplation, seeing that he was no longer alone in front of the church. It was nearly daylight, and several women with bowed heads, their mantillas falling over their eyes, were passing in front of the iron grating. The crutches of a lame man rang out on the fine tiles of the pavement, and, out beyond the tower, under the great arch of communication between the archbishop's palace and the Cathedral, the beggars were gathering in order to take up their accustomed positions at the cloister door. The faithful and "God's creatures"³ knew one another; every morning they were the first occupants of the church, and this daily meeting had established a kind of fraternity, and with much coughing and hoarseness they all lamented the cold of the morning and the lateness of the bell-ringer in coming down to open the doors.

³ *Pordioseres.*

A door opened beyond the archbishop's arch, that of the tower and the staircase leading to the dwellings in the upper cloister. A man crossed the street rattling a huge bunch of keys, and, followed by the usual morning assemblage, he proceeded to open the door of the lower cloister, narrow and pointed as an arrow-head. Gabriel recognised him, it was Mariano, the bell-ringer. To avoid being noticed he remained motionless in the *Piazza*, allowing those to pass first through the *Puerta del Mollete*,⁴ who seemed so anxious to hurry into the Metropolitan church, lest their usual places should be stolen from them and occupied by others.

At last he decided to follow them, and slowly descended the same steps leading down into the cloister, for the Cathedral, being built in a hollow, is much lower than the adjacent streets.

Everything appeared the same. There on the walls were the great frescoes of Bayan y Maella, representing the works and great deeds of Saint Eulogio, his preaching in the land of the Moors, and the cruelties of the infidels, who, with big turbans and enormous whiskers, were beating the saint. In the interior of the Mollete doorway was represented the horrible martyrdom of the Child de la Guardia; that legend born at the same time in so many Catholic towns during the heat of anti-Semitic hatred, the sacrifice of the Christian child, stolen from his home by Jews of grim countenance, who crucified him in order to tear out his heart and drink his blood.

⁴ Door of the rolls, or loaves.

The damp was rapidly effacing this romantic fresco, that filled the sides of the archway like the frontispiece of a book, causing it to scale off; but Gabriel could still see the horrible face of the judge standing at the foot of the cross, and the ferocious gesture of the man, who with his knife in his mouth, was bending forward to tear out the heart of the little martyr; theatrical figures, but they had often disturbed his childish dreams.

The garden in the midst of the cloister showed even in midwinter its southern vegetation of tall laurels and cypresses, stretching their branches through the grating of the arches that, five on each side, surrounded the square, and rising to the capitals of the pillars. Gabriel looked a long time at the garden, which was higher than the cloister; his face was on a level with the ground on which his father had laboured so many years ago; at last he saw again that charming corner of verdure—the Jews' market converted into a garden by the canons centuries before. The remembrance of it had followed him everywhere—in the Bois de Boulogne, in Hyde Park; for him the garden of the Toledan Cathedral was the most beautiful of all gardens, for it was the first he had even known in his life.

The beggars seated on the doorsteps watched him curiously, without daring to stretch out their hands; they could not tell if this early morning visitor with the worn-out cloak, the shabby hat, and the old boots, was simply an inquisitive traveller, or whether he was one of their own order, choosing a position about the Cathedral from whence to beg alms.

Annoyed by this curiosity, Luna walked down the cloister, passing by the two doors that opened into the church. The one called del Presentacion is a lovely example of Plateresque art, chiselled like a jewel, and adorned with fanciful and happy trifles. Going on further, he came to the back of the staircase by which the archbishops descended from their palace to the church; a wall covered with Gothic interlacings, and large escutcheons, and almost on the level of the ground was the famous "stone of light," a thin slice of marble as clear as glass, which gave light to the staircase, and was the admiration of all the countryfolk who came to visit the cloister. Then came the door of Santa Catalina, black and gold, with richly-carved polychrome foliage, mixed with lions and castles, and on the jambs two statues of prophets.

Gabriel went on a few steps further as he saw that the wicket of the doorway was being opened from inside. It was the bell-ringer going his rounds and opening all the doors; first of all a dog came out, stretching his neck as though he was going to bark with hunger, then two men with their caps over their eyes, wrapped in brown cloaks; the bell-ringer held up the curtain to let them pass out.

"Well, good-day, Mariano," said one of them by way of farewell.

"Good-night to the caretakers of God.... May you sleep well."

Gabriel recognised the nocturnal guardians of the Cathedral; locked into the church since the previous night, they were now going to their homes to sleep.

The dog trotted off in the direction of the seminary to get his breakfast off the scraps left by the students, free till such time as the guardians came to look for him, to lock themselves in the church once more.

Luna walked down the steps of the doorway into the Cathedral. His feet had scarcely touched the pavement before he felt on his face the cold touch of the clammy air, like an underground vault. In the church it was still dark, but above the stained glass of the hundreds of different-sized windows glowed in the early dawn, looking like magic flowers opening with the first splendours of day. Below, among the enormous pillars that looked like a forest of stone, all was darkness, broken here and there by the uncertain red spots of the lamps burning in the different chapels, wavering in the shadows. The bats flew in and out round the columns, wishing to prolong their possession of the fane, till the first rays of the sun shone through the windows; they fluttered over the heads of the devotees, who, kneeling before the altars, were praying loudly, as pleased to be in the Cathedral at that early hour as though it were their own house. Others chattered with the acolytes and other servants of the church, who were coming in by the different doors, sleepy and stretching themselves like workmen coming to their work. In the twilight, figures in black cloaks glided by on their way to the sacristy, stopping to make genuflections before each image; and in the distance, invisible in the darkness, you could still divine the presence of the bell-ringer, like a restless hobgoblin, by the rattle

of his bunch of keys and the creaking of the doors he opened on his round.

The Cathedral was awake. Echo repeated the banging of the doors from nave to nave; a large broom, making a saw-like noise, began to sweep in front of the sacristy; the church vibrated under the blows of certain acolytes engaged in removing the dust from the famous carved stalls in the choir; it seemed as though the Cathedral had awoke with its nerves irritated, and that the slightest touch produced complaints.

The men's footsteps resounded with a tremendous echo, as though the tombs of all the kings, archbishops and warriors hidden under the tiled floor were being disturbed.

The cold inside the church was even more intense than that outside; this, together with the damp of its soil traversed by underground water drains, and the leakage of subterranean and hidden tanks that stained the pavement, made the poor canons in the choir cough horribly, "shortening their lives," as they complainingly said.

The morning light began to spread through the naves, bringing out of the darkness the spotless whiteness of the Toledan Cathedral, the purity of its stone making it the lightest and most beautiful of temples. One could now see all the elegant and daring beauty of the eighty-eight pillars soaring audaciously into space, white as frozen snow, and the delicate ribs interlacing to carry the vaulting. In the upper storey the sun shone through the large stained-glass windows, making them look like fairy

gardens.

Gabriel seated himself on the base of one of the pilasters between two columns; but he was soon obliged to rise and move on, the dampness of the stone, and the vault-like cold throughout the whole building penetrated to his very bones.

He strolled through the naves, attracting the attention of the devotees, who stopped in their prayers to watch him. A stranger at that early hour, which belonged specially to the familiars of the Cathedral, excited their curiosity.

The bell-ringer passed him several times, following him with uneasy glance, as though this unknown man, of poverty-stricken aspect, who wandered aimlessly about at an hour when the treasures of the church were, as a rule, not so strictly watched, inspired him with little confidence.

Another man met him near the high altar. Luna recognised him also: it was Eusebio, the sacristan of the chapel of the Sagrario, "Azul de la Virgen,"⁵ as he was called by the Cathedral staff, on account of the celestial colour of the cloak he wore on festival days.

Six years had passed since Gabriel had last seen him, but he had not forgotten his greasy carcass, his surly face with its narrow, wrinkled forehead fringed with bristly hair, his bull neck that scarcely allowed him to breathe, and that made every breath like the blast of a bellows. All the servants of the Cathedral envied him his post, which was the most lucrative of all, to say

⁵ Virgin's blue.

nothing of the favour he enjoyed with the archbishop and the canons.

"Virgin's blue" considered the Cathedral as his own peculiar property, and he often came very near turning out those who inspired him with any antipathy.

He fixed his bold eyes on the vagabond he saw walking about the church, making an effort to raise his overhanging brows. Where had he seen this strange fellow before? Gabriel noted the effort he made to recall his memory, and turned his back to examine with pretended interest a coloured panel hanging on a pillar.

Flying from the curiosity excited by his presence in the fane, he went out into the cloister; there he felt more at his ease, quite alone. The beggars were chattering, seated on the doorsteps of the Mollete; many of the clergy passed through them, entering the church hurriedly by the door of the Presentacion; the beggars saluted them all by name, but without stretching out their hands. They knew them, they all belonged to the "household," and among friends one does not beg. They were there to fall on the strangers, and they waited patiently for the coming of the English; for, surely, all the strangers who came from Madrid by the early morning train could only be from England.

Gabriel waited near the door, knowing that those coming from the cloister must enter by it. He crossed the archbishop's arch, and, following the open staircase of the palace, descended into the street, re-entering the church by the Mollete door. Luna,

who knew all the history of the Cathedral, remembered the origin of its name. At first it was called "of justice," because under it the Vicar-General of the Archbishopric gave audience. Later it was called "del Mollete," because every day after high mass the acolytes and vergers assembled there for the blessing of the half-pound loaves, or rolls of bread distributed to the poor. Six hundred bushels of wheat—as Luna remembered—were distributed yearly in this alms, but this was in the days when the yearly revenues of the Cathedral were more than eleven millions.

Gabriel felt annoyed by the curious glances of the clergy, and of the devout entering the church. They were people accustomed to seeing each other daily at the same hour, and they felt their curiosity excited by seeing a stranger breaking in on the monotony of their lives.

He drew back to the further end of the cloister, then some words from the beggars made him retrace his steps.

"Ah! here comes old 'Vara de palo.'"⁶

"Good-day, Señor Esteban!"

A small man dressed in black, and shaved like a cleric, came down the steps.

"Esteban! Esteban!" cried Luna, placing himself between him and the door of the Presentacion.

"Wooden Staff" looked at him with his clear eyes like amber, the quiet eyes of a man used to spending long hours in the

⁶ Wooden staff.

Cathedral, with never a rebellious thought arising to disturb his immovable beatitude. He stood doubting for some time, as though he could scarcely credit the remote resemblance in this thin, pale face, to another that lived in his memory, but at last, with a pained surprise, he became convinced of its identity.

"Gabriel! my brother! is it really you?"

And the rigidly set face of the Cathedral servant, which seemed to have acquired the immobility of its pillars and statues, relaxed with an affectionate smile.

"When did you come? Where have you been? What is your life? Why have you come?"

"Wooden Staff" expressed his surprise by incessant questions, never giving his brother time to answer.

Gabriel at length explained, that he had arrived the previous night, and that he had waited outside the church since early dawn in the hopes of seeing his brother.

"I have now come from Madrid, but before that I was in many places: in England, in France, in Belgium, who knows where besides. I have wandered from one town to another, always struggling against hunger and the cruelty of men. My footsteps have been dogged by poverty and the police. When I rest a little, worn out by this Wandering Jew's existence, Justice, inspired by fear, orders me to move on, and so once again I begin my march. I am a man to be feared, Esteban, even as you now see me, with my body ruined before old age, and the certainty before me of a speedy death. Again, yesterday in Madrid, they told me I should

be sent once more to prison if I stayed there any longer, and so in the evening I took the train. Where shall I go? The world is wide; but for me and other rebels it is very small, and narrows till it does not leave a hand's breadth of ground for our feet. In all the world nothing was left me but you, and this peaceful silent corner where you live so happily, and so, I came to seek you. If you turn me out, nothing will be left me but to die in prison, or in a hospital, if indeed they would take me in when they know my name."

And Gabriel, spent with his words, coughed painfully, a hollow cavernous cough that seemed to tear his chest. He expressed himself vehemently, moving his arms freely, with the gestures of a man used to speaking in public, burning with the zeal of his cause.

"Ah! brother, brother!" said Esteban, with an accent of mild reproof, "what has it profited you reading so many books and newspapers? What is the use of trying to disturb and upset things that are all right; and if they are all wrong, is there no other means of righting them possible? If you had followed your own path quietly, you would have been a beneficiary of the Cathedral, and, who knows, you might have had a seat in the choir among the canons, for the honour and profit of the family! But you were always wrong-headed, although you were the cleverest of us all. Cursed talent that leads to such misery! What I have suffered, brother, trying to hear about your affairs! What bitterness have I not gone through since you last came here!

I thought you were contented and happy in the printing office in Barcelona, receiving a salary that was a fortune compared to what we earn here. I was disturbed at reading your name so often in the papers, at those meetings, where the division of everything is advocated, the death of religion and of the family, and I do not know what follies besides. The 'companion' Luna said this, or the 'companion' Luna has done the other, and I tried to hide from the people of the 'household' that this 'companion' could be you, guessing that such madness must turn out ill—furiously ill—and after—after came the affairs of the bombs."

"I had nothing to do with that," said Gabriel sadly. "I am only a theorist; I condemned the action as premature and inefficacious."

"I know it, Gabriel. I always thought you innocent. You so good, so gentle, who since you were a little one always astonished us by your kindness; you who seemed like a saint, as our poor mother used to say! You kill, and so treacherously, by means of such infernal artifices! Holy Jesus!"

And the "Wooden Staff" was silent, overcome by the recollection of those attempts that had overwhelmed his brother.

"But what is certain is," he continued after a little, "that you fell into the trap spread by the Government after those affairs. What I suffered for a while! Now and again I heard firing in the castle ditch beyond there, and I searched anxiously in the papers for the names of those executed, always fearing to find yours. There were rumours current of horrible tortures inflicted on those taken to make them confess the truth, and I thought of

you, so frail, so delicate, and I feared that some day you would be found dead in a dungeon. And I suffered even more from my anxiety that no one here should know of your situation; you a Luna! a son of Señor Esteban, the old gardener of the Primate, with whom all the canons and even the archbishop talked. You mixed up with those infernal scoundrels who wish to destroy the world. For this reason when Eusebio the 'Virgin's Blue,' asked me if you could possibly be the Luna of whom he read in the papers, I replied that my brother was in America, that I heard from him now and again, but that he was occupied with a big business—you see what pain! Fearing from one moment to another that they would kill you, unable to speak, unable to complain, fearful of telling my distress even to my family. How often have I prayed in there! Accustomed as we of the 'household' are to associate daily with God and the saints, we may be a little hard and narrow-minded, but misfortune softens the heart, and I addressed myself to Her who can do everything, to our patroness the Virgin of the Sagrario, begging her to remember you, who used to kneel at her shrine as a little child when you were preparing to enter the seminary."

Gabriel smiled gently as though admiring the simplicity of his brother.

"Do not laugh, I pray you—your smile wounds me. The Divine Lady did all she could for you. Months afterwards I learnt that you and others had been put on board ship with orders never to return to Spain, and, up to the present time, never a letter or a

scrap of news, good or ill. I thought you had died, Gabriel, in those distant lands, and more than once I have prayed for your poor soul, that I am sure wanted it."

The "companion" showed in his eyes his gratitude for these words.

"Thanks, Esteban. I admire your faith, but I did not come out of that dark adventure as well as you imagine. It would have been far better to have died. The aureole of a martyr is worth more than to enter a dungeon a man and come out of it a limp rag. I am very ill, Esteban, my sentence is irrevocable. I have no stomach left, my lungs are gone, and this body that you see is like a dislocated machine that can hardly move, creaking in every joint, as though all the bits intended to fall apart. The Virgin who saved me at your recommendation might really have interceded a little more in my favour, softening my jailors. Those wretches think to save the world by giving free rein to those wild beast instincts that slumber in us all, relics of a far-away past. Since then, at liberty, life has been more painful than death. On my return to Spain, pressed by poverty and persecution, my life has been a hell. I dare stop in no place where men congregate; they hunt me like dogs, forcing me to live out of the towns, driving me to the mountains, into the deserts, where no human beings live. It appears I am still a man to be feared, more to be feared than those desperadoes who throw bombs, because I can speak, because I carry in me an irresistible strength which forces me to preach the Truth if I find myself in the presence of miserable and

trodden-down wretches—but all this is coming to an end. You may be easy, brother, I am a dead man; my mission is drawing to a close, but others will come after me, and again others. The furrow is open and the seed is in its bowels—'GERMINAL!'⁷ as a friend of my exile shouted as he saw the last rays of the setting sun from the scaffold of the gibbet. I am dying, and I think I have the right to rest for a few months. I wish to enjoy for the first time in my life the sweets of silence, of absolute quiet, of incognito; to be no one, for no one to know me; to inspire neither sympathy nor fear. I should wish to be as a statue on the doorway, as a pillar in the Cathedral, immovable, over whose surface centuries have glided without leaving the slightest trace or emotion. To wait for death as a body that eats or breathes, but cannot think or suffer, nor feel enthusiasm; this to me would be happiness, brother. I do not know where to go; men are waiting for me out beyond these doors to drive me on again. Will you let me stay with you?"

For all answer the "Wooden Staff" laid his hand affectionately on Gabriel's arm.

"Let us come upstairs, madman—you shall not die, I will nurse you; what you want is care and quiet. We will cure that hot head, which seems like that of Don Quixote. Do you remember when you were a child reading us his history in the long evenings? Go along, dreamer, what does it signify to you if the world is better or worse regulated? As we found it, so it has always been. What does signify is that we should live like Christians, with the

⁷ "It will sprout."

certainty that the other life will be a better one, as it will be the work of God and not of man. Go up—let us go up."

And taking hold of the vagabond affectionately, they passed out of the cloister through the beggars, who had followed the interview with curious eyes, without, however, being able to hear a single word. They crossed the street and entered the staircase of the tower. The steps were of red brick, worn and broken; the whitewashed walls were covered on all sides with grotesque drawings and various inscriptions, scrawled by those who had ascended the tower, attracted by the fame of the big bell.

Gabriel went up slowly, gasping, and stopping at every step.

"I am ill, Esteban, very ill; these bellows let out the wind in every part."

Then, as though repenting his forgetfulness, he suddenly asked:

"And Pepa, your wife? I hope she is all right."

The brows of the Cathedral servant contracted, and his eyes became bright as though full of tears.

"She died," he said with laconic sadness.

Gabriel stopped suddenly, clinging to the handrail, struck with surprise; then, after a short silence, he went on, wishing to console his brother.

"But, Sagrario, my niece, she must have grown a beauty. The last time I saw her she looked like a queen, with her crown of auburn hair and her smiling face, with its golden bloom, like a ripe apricot. Did she marry the cadet, or is she still with you?"

The "Wooden Staff" appeared even more sad, and he looked grimly at his brother.

"She also died," he said drily.

"Sagrario also dead!" exclaimed Gabriel astounded.

"She is dead to me, which is the same thing. Brother, by all you love best in the world, do not speak to me of her."

Gabriel understood that he had opened some deep wound by his inquiries, and so said no more, beginning once more his ascent. During his absence a terrible event had happened in his brother's life—one of those events that break up a family and separate for ever those that survive.

They crossed the gallery covered by the archbishop's archway and entered the upper cloister called "the Claverias": four arcades of equal length to those of the lower cloister, but quite bare of decoration, and with a poverty-stricken aspect. The pavement was chipped and broken, the four sides had a balustrade running round between the flat pillars that supported the old beams of the roof. It had been a provisional work three hundred years ago, and had always remained in the same state. All along the whitewashed walls, the doors and windows belonging to the "habitaciones" of the Cathedral servants opened without order or symmetry. These were transmitted with the office from father to son. The cloister, with its low arcade, looked like a street having houses on one side only; opposite was the flat colonnade with its balustrade, against which the pointed branches of the cypresses in the garden rested. Above the roof of the cloister could be seen the windows

of another row of "habitacions," for nearly all the dwellings in the Claverias had two stories.

It was the population of a whole town that lived above the Cathedral, on a level with its roofs; and when night fell, and the staircase of the tower was locked, it remained quite isolated from the city. This semi-ecclesiastical tribe was born and died in the very heart of Toledo without ever going down into the streets, clinging with traditional instinct to the carved mountain of stone, whose arches served it as a refuge. They lived saturated with the scent of incense, breathing the peculiar smell of mould and old iron belonging to ancient buildings, and with no more horizon than the arches of the bell tower, whose height soared into the small patch of blue sky visible from the cloister.

The "companion" Luna thought he was returning with one step to the days of his childhood. Little children like the Gabriel of former days were playing about the four galleries, and sitting in that part of the cloister bathed by the first rays of the sun. Women, who reminded of his mother, were shaking the bedclothes out over the garden, or sweeping the red bricks opposite their dwellings; everything seemed the same. Time had left it quite alone, evidently thinking there was nothing there that he could possibly age. The "companion" could now see two sketches of lay brothers that he had drawn with charcoal when he was eight years old; had it not been for the children one might have thought that life had been suspended in that corner of the Cathedral, as though this aerial population could neither be born

nor die.

The "Wooden Staff," frowning and gloomy since the last words were spoken, tried to give some explanation to his brother.

"I live in our same old house. They left it to me out of respect to the memory of my father. I am grateful to the clergy of the Chapter, taking into consideration that I am nothing but a sad old 'Wooden Staff.' Since my misfortune happened I have had an old woman to keep house, and Don Luis, the Chapel-master, lives with me. You will come to know him, a young priest of great talent, but quite hidden here: one of God's souls, whom they think crazy in the Cathedral, but who lives like an angel."

They entered into the house of the Lunas, which was one of the best in the Claverias. By the door two rows of flower vases in the shape of a clock-case fastened to the walls were filled with hanging plants; inside, in the sitting room, Gabriel found everything the same as during his father's lifetime. The white walls that with years had become like ivory, were still decorated with the old engravings of saints, the chairs of mahogany, bright with constant rubbing, looked like new, in spite of their curves, which showed them to belong to a previous century, and their seats almost ready to drop through. Through a half-open door he could see into the kitchen, where his brother had gone to give some orders to a timid-looking old woman. In one corner of the room, half hidden, was a sewing machine. Luna had seen his niece working at it the last time he came to the Cathedral. It was the permanent remembrance the "little one" had left behind

her after that catastrophe which had filled her father with such gloomy sadness. Through a back window of the room Gabriel could see the inner court, which made this "habitacion" one of the most charming in the Claverias, the open expanse of sky, and the upper rooms on all four sides, supported by rows of slender pillars, that made the courtyard look like a little cloister.

Esteban came back and rejoined his brother.

"You must say what you would like for breakfast. It would soon be ready; ask, man, ask for what you want, for though I am poor I shall take little credit to myself unless I can make you pick up a little and lose that look of a resuscitated corpse."

Gabriel smiled sadly.

"It is useless your troubling; my stomach is quite gone; a little milk is enough for it, and I am thankful if it retains it."

Esteban ordered the old woman to go into the town in search of the milk, and he had hardly seated himself by his brother's side when the door giving into the cloister opened, and the head of a young man appeared.

"Good-day, uncle!" he exclaimed.

His face was unhealthy and currish, the eyes were malicious, and above his ears were combed two large tufts of glossy hair.

"Come in, vagabond, come in," said the "Wooden Staff."

And he added, turning to his brother:

"Do you know who this is? No? It is the son of our poor brother, whom God has taken to his glory. He lives in the upper dwellings of the cloister with his mother, who washes the linen of

the choir, and of the señores canons; and it is a delight to see how she crimps the surplices. Thomas, lad, bow to the gentleman; it is your uncle Gabriel, who has just arrived from America, and from Paris, and I don't know from where else besides! From very far off countries, very far off."

The young man saluted Gabriel, though he seemed rather scared by the sad and suffering face of their relative, whom he had heard his mother speak of as a mysterious and romantic being.

"Here, as you see him," proceeded Esteban, speaking to his brother, and pointing to his nephew, "he is the worst lot in the Cathedral. The Señor Obrero⁸ would more than once have turned him out into the street, were it not for respect to the memory of his father and grandfather, and also to the name he bears, for everybody knows the Lunas are as ancient in the Cathedral as the stones in its walls. No escapade enters his head but he hastens to carry it out, and he swears like a pagan even in full sacristy, under the very noses of the beneficiaries. Don't dare to deny it! Grumbler!"

And he shook his first at the lad, half severely, half smiling, as though in the bottom of his heart he felt some pride in his nephew's scrapes, who received his reprimand with grimaces that made his face twitch like that of a monkey, while his eyes retained their fixed and insolent stare.

"It is a real shame," continued the uncle, "that you should

⁸ Canon in charge of the fabric.

comb your hair in that fashion, like the Merry Andrews that come to Toledo from the Court on great festivals. In the good old times of the Cathedral they would have shaved your head for you. But in these days of alienation, of universal licence and misfortunes, our holy church is as poor as a rat, and poverty does not give the señores canons much inclination to examine details. It is a grievous pity to see how everything is going down. What desolation, Gabriel! If you could only see it! The Cathedral is as beautiful as ever, but we do not now see the former beauty of the Lord's worship. The Chapel-master says the same thing, and he is indignant to see that on great festivals only about half-a-dozen musicians take their place in the middle of the choir. The young people who live in the Claverias have not our great love for the mother-church; they complain of the shortness of their salaries without considering that it is the temporalities that support religion. If this goes on I should not be surprised to see this popinjay and other rascals like him playing at 'Rayuelo'⁹ in the crossways in front of the choir. May God forgive me!"

And the simple "Wooden Staff" made a gesture as though scandalised at his own words. He went on:

"This young fellow you see here is not satisfied with his position in life, and yet, though he is only a youth, he occupies the place his poor father could only attain to after thirty years' service. He aspires to be a toreador, and often on a Sunday he dares to take part in the bull-fight in the bull-ring of Toledo. His

⁹: A game of drawing lines.

mother came down, dishevelled like a Magdalen, to tell me all about it, and I, thinking that as his father was dead I ought to act in his place, I watched for our gentleman as he returned tricked out smartly from the bull-ring, and I thrashed him up the tower staircase to his rooms with the same wooden staff that I use in the Cathedral, and he can tell you if I have not a heavy hand when I am angry. Virgin of the Sagrario! A Luna of the Holy Metropolitan Church lowering himself to be a bull-fighter! The canons did laugh, and even the Lord Cardinal himself, as I have been told, when they heard about the affair! A witty beneficiary has since nicknamed him the "Tato,"¹⁰ and so they all call him now in the Cathedral. So you see, brother, how much respect this rascal pays to his family."

The "Silenciaro"¹¹ attempted to annihilate the "Tato" with his glance, but this latter only smiled without paying much attention, either to his uncle's words or looks.

"You would hardly believe, Gabriel," he continued, "that this creature often wants a bit of bread, and it is for this reason he commits all these follies. In spite of his wrong-headedness, since the age of twenty he has occupied the position of 'Perrero'¹² in the holy church, he has obtained what in better times only those could obtain who had served well and striven hard for years. He gets his six reals a day, and as he can go freely about the church he

¹⁰ *Tato*—Armadillo.

¹¹ *Silenciaro*—Officer appointed to keep silence.

¹² *Perrero*—Beadle whose special duty it is to chase the dogs out of church.

can show the curiosities to strangers; and so with the salary and the tips he gets, he is much better off than I am. The foreigners who visit the Cathedral, excommunicated people who look upon us as strange monkeys, and who think that anything interesting of ours is only worthy of a laugh, take a fancy to him. The English ask him if he is a toreador, and he—what does he want better than that! When he sees they pay him according as he pleases them, he brings out his pack of lies, for, unfortunately, no one has any check on the deceit, and he tells them about all the great bull-fights in which he has taken part in Toledo, and all about the bulls he has killed; and these blockheads from England make a note of it in their albums, and even some coarse hand may make a sketch of this imposter's head; all he cares for is that they should believe all his lies and give him a peseta on leaving. It matters very little to him, if when these heretics return to their own country they spread the report that in Toledo, in the Holy Metropolitan Church of all Spain, the Cathedral servants are bull-fighters, and assist in the ceremonies of worship between the bull runs. The sum total is, that he earns more than I do, but in spite of this he considers his employment beneath him. And such beautiful duties, too. To walk in the great processions before everyone, close to the Primate's great banner, with a staff covered with red velvet to support him should he chance to fall, and wearing a robe of scarlet brocade like a cardinal. Our Chapel-master, who knows a great deal about such things, says that when he wears that robe he looks like a certain Diente, or some name of the

sort, who lived hundreds of years ago in Italy, and went down into hell, and afterwards described his journey in poetry."

Sounds of footsteps were heard on the narrow circular staircase in the thickness of the wall that led from the sitting-room to the storey above.

"It is Don Luis," said the "Wooden Staff," "he is going to say his mass in the chapel of the Sagrario, and afterwards to the choir."

Gabriel rose from his sofa to salute the priest. He was feeble and small of stature, but the thing about him that struck you at first sight was the disproportion between his shrunken body and his immense head. The forehead, round and prominent, seemed to crush with its weight the dark and irregular features, much pitted by smallpox. He was very ugly, but still the expression of his blue eyes, the brilliancy of his white and regular teeth, and the ingenuous smile, almost childlike, that played on his lips, gave his face that sympathetic expression which showed him to be one of those simple souls wrapped up in their artistic fancies.

"And so this gentleman is the brother of whom you have spoken to me so often," said he, hearing the introduction made by Esteban.

He held out his hand in a friendly way to Gabriel. They both looked very sickly, but their bodily infirmities seemed to be a bond of attraction.

"As the señor has studied in the seminary," said the Chapel-master, "he will know something about music."

"It is the only thing that I remember of all those studies."

"But having travelled so much all over the world, you must have heard a great deal of good music."

"That is so. Music is to me the most pleasing of all the arts. I do not know much about it, but I feel it."

"Very well, very well, we shall be good friends. You must tell me all sorts of things; how I envy you having travelled so much."

He spoke like a restless child, without sitting down. Although the "Silenciario" offered him a chair at each of his flirtings round the room, he wandered from side to side in his shabby cloak, his hat in his hand—a poor worn-out hat with not a trace of pile left, knocked in, with a layer of grease on its flaps, miserable and old, like the cassock and the shoes. But in spite of this poverty the Chapel-master had a certain refinement about him. His hair, rather too long for his ecclesiastical dress, curled round his temples, and the dignified way in which he folded his cloak round his body reminded one of the cloak of a tenor at the opera. He had a sort of easy grace that betrayed the artist who, under the priestly robes, was longing to get rid of them, leaving them at his feet like a winding sheet.

Some deep notes from the bell, like distant thunder, floated into the room through the cloister.

"Uncle, they are calling us to the choir," said the "Tato." "We ought to have been in the Cathedral before now; it is nearly eight o'clock."

"It is true, lad. I am glad you were here to remind me; let us

be going."

Then he added, speaking to the musical priest:

"Don Luis, your mass is at eight o'clock. You can talk with Gabriel later on; now we must fulfil our obligations, for those who are late will, as you say, be turned out, even though our office hardly gives us enough to eat."

The Chapel-master assented sadly with a movement of his head, and went out, following the two Cathedral servants. He seemed to go unwillingly, as though forced to a task that was to him both irksome and painful. He hummed absently while giving his hand to Gabriel, who thought he recognised a fragment of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in the low and uneven tones that came from the lips of the young priest.

Now that he was alone Luna stretched himself on the sofa, giving himself up to the fatigue he felt from his long wait before the Cathedral. His brother's old servant placed a little pitcher of milk by his side, and filling a cup, Gabriel drank, endeavouring to overcome the repugnance of his weak stomach, which almost refused to retain the liquid. His body, fatigued by his restless night and the long morning wait, at last assimilated the nourishment, and a soft, dreamy languor spread over him that he had not felt for a long time. He soon fell asleep, remaining for more than an hour motionless on the sofa, and though his breathing was disturbed, and his chest racked by his hollow cough, they were unable to wake him from his slumber.

When he did awake, it was suddenly, with a nervous start that

shook him from head to foot, making him bound from the sofa as though a spring had been touched. It was the wariness produced by his ever present danger, that had become habitual to him; the habit of restlessness formed in dark dungeons, expecting hourly to see the door open, to be beaten like a dog, or led off between a double file of muskets to the square of execution; the habit of living perpetually watched, of feeling in every country the espionage of the police around him, the habit of being awake in the middle of the night in his wretched room in some inn by the order to leave at once; the unrest of the ancient Asheverus, who, as soon as he could enjoy a moment's rest, heard the eternal cry—"Go on. Go on."

He did not try to sleep again, he preferred the present reality, the silence of the Cathedral which was to him as a gentle caress, the noble calm of the temple, that immense pile of worked stone, which seemed to press on him, enveloping him, hiding for ever his weakness and his persecutions.

He went out into the cloister, and, resting his elbows on the balustrade, looked down into the garden.

The Claverias seemed quite deserted. The children who had enlivened them in the early morning had gone to school, the women were inside their houses preparing their mid-day meal, there seemed to be no one in the cloister except himself; the sunlight bathed all one side, and the shadow of the pillars cut obliquely the great golden spaces flooding the pavement. The majestic silence, the holy calm of the Cathedral overpowered the

agitator like a gentle narcotic. The seven centuries surrounding those stones seemed to him like so many veils hiding him from the rest of the world. In one of the dwellings of the Claverias you could hear the incessant tap, tap, of a hammer; it was that of a shoemaker whom Gabriel had seen through the window-panes, bending over his bench. In the square of sky framed by the roofs some pigeons were flying, lazily moving their wings, soaring in the vault of intense blue; some flew down into the cloister, and, perching on the balustrade, broke the religious silence with their gentle cooing; now and again the heavy door-curtains of the church were lifted, and a breath of air charged with incense floated over the garden of the Claverias, together with the deep notes of the organ, and the sound of voices chanting Latin words and solemnly prolonging the cadences.

Gabriel looked at the garden surrounded by its arcades of white stone, with its rough buttresses of dark granite, in the chinks of which the rain had left an efflorescence of fungus, like little tufts of black velvet. The sun struck on one angle of the garden, leaving the rest in cool green shade, a conventual twilight. The bell-tower hid one portion of the sky, displaying on its reddish sides, ornamented with Gothic tracery and salient buttresses, the fillets of black marble with heads of mysterious personages, and the shields with the arms of the different archbishops who had assisted at its building; above, near the pinnacles of white stone, were seen the bells behind enormous gratings; from below they looked like three bronze birds in a cage

of iron.

Three deep strokes from a bell, echoing round the Cathedral, announced that the High Mass had arrived at its most solemn moment, the mountain of stone seemed to tremble with the vibration, which was transmitted through the naves and galleries, to the arcades and down to the lowest foundations.

Again there was silence, which seemed even deeper after the bronze thunders; the cooing of the pigeons could again be heard, and, down in the garden, the twittering of the birds, warmed by the sun's rays that began to gild its cool twilight.

Gabriel felt himself deeply moved; the sweet silence, the absolute calm, the feeling almost of non-existence overpowered him; and beyond those walls was the world, but here it could not be seen, it could not be felt; it remained respectful but indifferent before that monument of the past, that splendid sepulchre, in whose interior nothing excited its curiosity. Who would ever imagine he was there? That growth of seven centuries, built by vanished greatness for a dying faith, should be his last refuge. In the full tide of unbelief the church should be his sanctuary, as it had been in former days to those great criminals of the Middle Ages, who, from the height of the cloister mocked at justice, detained at the doors like the beggars. Here should be consummated in silence and calm the slow decay of his body, here he would die with the serene satisfaction of having died to the world long before. At last he realised his hope of ending his days in a corner of the sleepy Spanish Cathedral, the only hope

that had sustained him as he wandered on foot along the highways of Europe, hiding himself from the civil guards and the police, spending his nights in ditches, huddled up, his head on his knees, fearing every moment to die of cold.

He clung to the Cathedral as a shipwrecked and drowning man clings to the spar of a sinking ship; this had been his hope, and he was beginning to realise it. The church would receive him, like an old and infirm mother, unable to smile, but who could still stretch out her arms.

"At last! At last!" murmured Luna.

And he smiled, thinking of the world of sorrows and persecutions that he was leaving behind him, as though he were going to some remote place, situated in another planet, from which he would never return; the Cathedral would shelter him for ever.

In the profound stillness of the cloister, that the sound of the street could not reach, the "companion" Luna thought he heard far off, very far off, the shrill sound of a trumpet and the muffled roll of drums, then he remembered the Alcazar of Toledo, dominating the Cathedral from its height, intimidating it with the enormous mass of its towers; they were the drums and trumpets of the Military Academy.

These sounds were painful to Gabriel; the world had faded from his sight, and when he thought himself so very far from it, he could still feel its presence only a little way beyond the roof of the temple.

CHAPTER II

Since the times of the second Cardinal de Bourbon Senior Esteban Luna had been gardener of the Cathedral, by the right that seemed firmly established in his family. Who was the first Luna that entered the service of the Holy Metropolitan Church? As the gardener asked himself this question he smiled complacently, raising his eyes to heaven, as though he would inquire of the immensity of space. The Lunas were as ancient as the foundations of the church; a great many generations had been born in the abode in the upper cloister, and even before the illustrious Cisneros built the Claverias the Lunas had lived in houses adjacent, as though they could not exist out of the shadow of the Primacy. To no one did the Cathedral belong with better right than to them. Canons, beneficiaries, archbishops passed; they gained the appointment, died, and others came in their places. It was a constant procession of new faces, of masters who came from every corner of Spain to take their seats in the choir, to die a few years afterwards, leaving the vacancies to be filled again by other newcomers; but the Lunas always remained at their post, as though the ancient family were another column of the many that supported the temple. It might happen that the archbishop who to-day was called Don Bernardo, might next year be called Don Caspar, or again another Don Fernando. But what seemed utterly impossible was that the Cathedral could exist

without Lunas in the garden, in the sacristy, or in the crossways of the choir, accustomed as it had been for centuries to their services.

The gardener spoke with pride of his descent, of his noble and unfortunate relative the constable Don Alvaro, buried like a king in his chapel behind the high altar; of the Pope Benedict XIII., proud and obstinate like all the rest of his family; of Don Pedro de Luna, fifth of his name to occupy the archiepiscopal throne of Toledo, and of other relatives not less distinguished.

"We are all from the same stem," he said with pride. "We all came to the conquest of Toledo with the good King Alfonso VI. The only difference has been, that some Lunas took a fancy to go and fight the Moors, and they became lords, and conquered castles, whereas my ancestors remained in the service of the Cathedral, like the good Christians they were."

With the satisfaction of a duke who enumerates his ancestors, the Señor Esteban carried back the line of the Lunas till it became misty and was lost in the fifteenth century. His father had known Don Francisco III. Lorenzana, a magnificent and prodigal prince of the church, who spent the abundant revenues of the archbishopric in building palaces and editing books, like a great lord of the Renaissance. He had known also the first Cardinal Bourbon, Don Luis II., and used to narrate the romantic life of this Infante. Brother of the King Carlos III., the custom that dedicated some of the younger branches to the church had made him a cardinal at nine years old. But that good lord, whose

portrait hung in the Chapter House, with white hair, red lips and blue eyes, felt more inclination to the joys of this world than to the grandeurs of the church, and he abandoned the archbishopric to marry a lady of modest birth, quarrelling for ever with the king, who sent him into exile. And the old Luna, leaping from ancestor to ancestor through the long centuries, remembered the Archduke Alberto, who resigned the Toledan mitre to become Governor of the Low Countries, and the magnificent Cardinal Tavera, protector of the arts, all excellent princes, who had treated his family affectionately, recognising their secular adhesion to the Holy Metropolitan Church.

The days of his youth were bad ones for the Señor Esteban; it was the time of the war of Independence. The French occupied Toledo, entering into the Cathedral like pagans, rattling their swords and prying into every corner at full High Mass. The jewels were concealed, the canons and beneficiaries, who were now called *prebendaries*, were living dispersed over the Peninsula. Some had taken refuge in places that were still Spanish, others were hidden in the towns, making vows for the speedy return of "the desired." It was pitiful to hear the choir with its few voices; only the very timid, who were bound to their seats and could not live away from them, had remained, and had recognised the usurping king. The second Cardinal de Bourbon, the gentle and insignificant Don Luis Maria, was in Cadiz, the only one of the family remaining in Spain, and the Cortes had laid their hands on him to give a certain dynastic appearance to their revolutionary

authority.

When the war was over and the poor cardinal returned to his seat, the Señor Esteban was moved to pity to see his sad and childlike face, with the small round head, and insignificant appearance; he returned discouraged and disheartened, after receiving his nephew Ferdinand VII. in Madrid. All his colleagues in the regency were either in prison or in exile, and that he did not suffer a like fate was solely due to his mitre and to his name. The unfortunate prelate thought he had done good service in maintaining the interests of his family during the war, and now he found himself accused of being Liberal, an enemy to religion and the throne, without being able to imagine how he had conspired against them. The poor Cardinal de Bourbon languished sadly in his palace, devoting his revenues to works in the Cathedral, till he died in 1823 at the beginning of the reaction, leaving his place to Inguanzo, the tribune of absolutism, a prelate with iron-grey whiskers, who had made his career as deputy in the Cortes at Cadiz, attacking as deputy every sort of reform, and advocating a return to the times of the Austrians as the surest means of saving his country.

The good gardener saluted with equal cordiality the Bourbon Cardinal, hated by the kings, as the prelate with the whiskers, who made all the diocese tremble with his bitter and harassing temper, and his arrogance as a revolutionary Absolutist. For him, whoever occupied the throne of Toledo was a perfect man, whose acts no one should dare to discuss, and he turned a deaf ear to

the murmurs of the canons and beneficiaries, who, smoking their cigarettes in the arbour of his garden, spoke of the genialities of this Señor de Inguanzo, and were indignant at the Government of Ferdinand VII. not being sufficiently firm, through fear of the foreigners, to re-establish the wholesome tribunal of the Inquisition.

The only thing that troubled the gardener was to watch the decadence of his beloved Cathedral. The revenues of the archbishop and of the Chapter had been greatly wasted during the war. What had occurred was what happens after a great flood, when the waters begin to subside and carry everything away with them, leaving the land bare and uninhabited. The Primacy lost many of its rights, the tenants made themselves masters, taking advantage of the disorders of the State; the towns refused to pay their feudal services, as though the necessity of defending themselves and helping in the war had freed them for ever from vassalage; further, the turbulent Cortes had decreed the abolition of all lordships, and had very much curtailed the enormous revenues of the Cathedral, acquired in the centuries when the archbishops of Toledo put on their casques, and went out to fight the Moors with double-handed swords.

Even so, a considerable fortune remained to the church of the Primacy, and it maintained its splendour as if nothing had happened, but the Señor Esteban scented danger from the depths of his garden, hearing from the canons of the Liberal conspiracies, the executions by shooting and hanging, and the

exiling, to which the king Señor Don Fernando appealed, in order to repress the audacity of the "Negros," the enemies of the Monarchy and of religion.

"They have tasted the sweets," said he, "and they will return—see if they do not return, and take what is left! During the war they took the first bite, taking from the Cathedral more than half that was hers, and now they will come and take the rest; they will try and catch hold of the handle of the fryingpan."

The gardener was angry at the possibility of such a thing happening. Ay! and was it for this that so many lord archbishops of Toledo fought against the Moors? Conquering towns, assaulting castles and annexing pasture lands, which all came to be the property of the Cathedral, contributing to the great splendour of God's worship! And was everything to fall into the dirty hands of the enemies of anything that was holy? Everything that so many faithful souls had willed to them on their deathbeds, queens and magnates, and simple country gentlemen, who left the best part of their fortunes to the Holy Metropolitan Church, in the hope of saving their souls! What would happen to the six hundred souls, big and little, clerics and seculars, dignitaries and simple servants who lived from the revenues of the Cathedral?... And was this called liberty? To rob what did not belong to them, leaving in poverty innumerable families who were now supported by the "great pot" of the Chapter?

When the sad forebodings of the gardener began to be realised, and Mendizabal decreed the dismemberment, the Señor

Esteban thought he would have died of rage. But the Cardinal Inguanzo did better. Placed in his seat by the Liberals as his predecessor had been by the Absolutists, he thought it best to die in order to take no part in these attempts against the sacred revenues of the Church.

The Señor Luna, who was only a humble gardener, and who therefore could not imitate the illustrious Cardinal, went on living. But every day he felt more and more sorrowful, knowing that for shamefully low prices, many of the Moderates, who still came to High Mass, were stealthily acquiring to-day a house, to-morrow a farm, another day pasture lands, properties all belonging to the Primacy, but which had lately been put on the list of what was called national property.

Robbers! this slow subversion and sale, that rent in pieces the revenues of the Cathedral, caused the Señor Esteban as much indignation as though the bailiffs had entered his house in the Claverias to remove the family furniture, each piece of which embalmed the memory of some ancestor.

There were times in which he thought of abandoning his garden, and going to Maestrazgo, or to the northern provinces, in search of some of the loyal defenders of the rights of Charles V. and of the return to the old times. He was then forty years of age, strong and active, and though his temperament was pacific and he had never touched a musket, he felt himself fired by the example of certain timid and pious students, who had fled from the seminary, and were now, so it was said, fighting in Catalonia

behind the red cloak of Don Ramon Cabrera.

But the gardener, in order not to be alone in his big "habitacion" in the Claverias, had married three years previously the daughter of the sacristan, and he had now one son; besides, he could not tear himself away from the church, he was another square block in the mountain of stone, he moved and spoke as a man, but he felt a certainty that he should perish at once if he left his garden. Besides, the Cathedral would lose one of the most important props if a Luna were wanting in its service, and he felt terrified at the bare thought of living out of it. How could he wander over the mountains fighting, and firing shots, when years had passed without his treading any other profane soil beyond the little bit of street between the staircase of the Claverias and the Puerta del Mollete?

And so he went on cultivating his garden, feeling the melancholy satisfaction that he was at least sheltered from all the wicked revolutionaries under the shadow of that colossus of stone, which inspired awe and respect from its majestic age. They might curtail the revenues of the temple, but they would be powerless against the Christian faith of those who lived under its protection.

The garden, deaf and insensible to the revolutionary tempests that broke over the church, continued to unfold its sombre beauty between the arcades, the laurels grew till they reached the balustrade of the upper cloister, and the cypresses seemed as though they aspired to touch the roofs; the creepers twined

themselves among the iron railings, making thick lattices of verdure, and the ivy mantled the wall of the central arbour, which was surmounted by a cap of black slate with a rusty iron cross. After the evening choir the clergy would come and sit in here and read, by the soft green light that filtered through the foliage, the news from the Carlist Camp, and discuss enthusiastically the great exploits of Cabrera, while above, the swallows quite indifferent to human presence, circled and screamed in the clear blue sky. The Señor Esteban would watch, standing silently, this bat-like evening club, which was kept quietly hidden from those belonging to the National Militia of Toledo.

When the war terminated, the last illusions of the gardener vanished, he fell into the silence of despair and wished to know of nothing outside the Cathedral. God had abandoned the good and faithful, and the traitors and evil-doers were triumphant; his only consolation was the stronghold of the temple, which had lived through so many centuries of turmoil, and could still defy its enemies for so many more.

He only wished to be the gardener, to die in the upper cloister like his forefathers, and to leave fresh Lunas to perpetuate the family services in the Cathedral. His eldest son, Tomas, was now twelve years old, and able to help him in the care of the garden. After an interval of many years a second son had been born, Esteban, who, almost before he could walk, would kneel before the images in the "habitacion," crying for his mother to carry him down into the church to see the saints.

Poverty entered into the Cathedral, reducing the number of canons and prebendaries; at the death of any of the old servants, their places were suppressed, and a great many carpenters, masons, and glaziers who previously had lived there as workmen specially attached to the Primacy, and were continually working at its repairs, were dismissed. If from time to time certain repairs were indispensable, workmen were called in from outside, by the day; many of the "habitacions" in the Claverias were unoccupied, and the silence of the grave reigned where previously the population of a small town had gathered and crowded. The Government of Madrid (and you should have seen the expression of contempt with which the old gardener emphasised those words) was in treaty with the Holy Father to arrange something called the Concordat. The number of canons was limited as though the Holy Metropolitan was a college, they were to be paid by the Government the same as the servants, and for the maintenance of worship in this most famous Cathedral of all Spain—which, when it formerly collected its tithe, scarcely knew where to lock up such riches—a monthly pension of twelve hundred pesetas was now granted.

"One thousand two hundred pesetas, Tomas!" said he to his son, a silent boy, who took very little interest in anything but his garden. "One thousand two hundred pesetas, when I can remember the Cathedral having more than six millions of revenue! Bad times are in store for us, and were I anyone else I would bring you up to an office, or something outside the church;

but the Lunas cannot desert the cause of God, like so many traitors who have betrayed it. Here we were born, here we must die, to the very last one of the family." And furious with the clergy, who seemed to put a good face on the Concordat and their salaries, thankful to have come out of the revolutionary tumults even as well as they had done, he isolated himself in his garden, locking the door in the iron railing, and shrinking from the assemblies of former times!

His little floral world did not change, its sombre verdure was like the twilight that had enveloped the gardener's soul. It had not the brilliant gaiety, overflowing with colours and scents of a garden in the open, bathed in full sunlight, but it had the shady and melancholy beauty of a conventual garden between four walls, with no more light than what came through the eaves and the arcades, and no other birds but those flying above, who looked with wonder at this little paradise at the bottom of a well. The vegetation was the same as that of the Greek landscapes, and of the idylls of the Greek poets—laurels, cypress and roses, but the arches that surrounded it, with their alleys paved with great slabs of granite in whose interstices wreaths of grass grew, the cross of its central arbour, the mouldy smell of the old iron railings, and the damp of the stone buttresses coloured a soft green by the rain, gave the garden an atmosphere of reverend age and a character of its own.

The trees waved in the wind like censers, the flowers, pale and languid with an anaemic beauty, smelt of incense, as though the

air wafted through the doors of the Cathedral had changed their natural perfumes.

The rain, trickling from the gargoyles and gutters of the roofs, was collected in two large and deep stone tanks; sometimes the gardener's pail would disturb their green covering, letting one perceive for an instant the blue-blackness of their depths, but as soon as the circles disappeared, the vegetation once more drew together and covered them over afresh, without a movement, without a ripple, quiet and dead as the temple itself in the stillness of the evening.

At the feast of Corpus, and that of the Virgin of the Sagrario in the middle of August, the townspeople brought their pitchers into the garden, and the Señor Esteban allowed them to be filled from these two cisterns. It was an ancient custom and one much appreciated by the old Toledans, who thought much of the fresh water of the Cathedral, condemned as they were during the rest of the year to drink the red and muddy liquid of the Tagus. At other times people came into the garden to give little presents to Señor Esteban, the devout entrusted him with palms for their images, or bought little bunches of flowers, believing them to be better than those they could buy at the farms, because they came from the Metropolitan Church, and the old women begged branches of laurel for flavouring and for household medicines. These incomings, and the two pesetas that the Chapter had assigned to the gardener after the final dismemberment, helped the Señor Esteban and his family to get on. When he was getting

well on in years his third son Gabriel was born, a child who from his fourth year attracted the attention of all the women in the Claverias; his mother affirmed with a blind faith that he was a living image of the Child Jesus that the Virgin of the Sagrario held in her arms. Her sister Tomasa, who was married to the "Virgin's Blue," and was the mother of a numerous family which occupied nearly the half of the upper cloister, talked a great deal about the intelligence of her little nephew, when he could hardly speak, and about the infantile unction with which he gazed at the images.

"He looks like a saint," she said to her friends. "You should see how seriously he says his prayers.... Gabrielillo will become somebody; who knows if we may not see him a bishop! Acolytes that I knew when my father had charge of the sacristy now wear the mitre, and possibly some day we may have one of them in Toledo."

The chorus of caresses and praises surrounded the first years of the child like a cloud of incense; the family only lived for him, the Señor Esteban, a father in the good old Latin style who loved his sons, but was severe and stern with them in order that they might grow up honourable, felt in the presence of the child a return of his own youth; he played with him, and lent himself smilingly to all his little caprices; his mother abandoned her household duties to please him, and his brother hung on his babbling words. The eldest, Tomas, the silent youth who had taken the place of his father in the care of the garden, and who

even in the depths of winter went barefooted over the flower-beds and rough stones of the alleys, came up often bringing handfuls of sweet-scented herbs, so that his little brother might play with them. Esteban, the second, who was now thirteen and who enjoyed a certain notoriety among the other acolytes on account of his scrupulous care in assisting at the mass, delighted Gabriel with his red cassock and his pleated tunic, and brought him taper ends and little coloured prints, abstracted from the breviary of some canon.

Now and then he carried him in his arms to the store-room of the giants, an immense room between the buttresses and the arches of the nave, vaulted with stone. Here were the heroes of the ancient feasts and holidays. The Cid with a huge sword, and four set pieces representing as many parts of the world: huge figures with dusty and tattered clothes and broken faces, which had once rejoiced the streets of Toledo, and were now rotting under the roofs of its Cathedral. In one corner reposed the Tarasca, a frightful monster of cardboard, which terrified Gabriel when it opened its jaws, while on its wrinkled back sat smiling, idiotically, a dishevelled and indecent doll, whom the religious feeling of former ages had baptised with the name of Anne Boleyn.

When Gabriel went to school all were astonished at his progress. The youngsters of the upper cloister who were such a trial to "Silver Stick," the priest charged with maintaining good order among the tribe established in the roofs of the Cathedral,

looked upon the little Gabriel as a prodigy. When he could scarcely walk he could read easily, and at seven he began to recite his Latin, mastering it quickly, as though he had never spoken anything else in his life, and at ten he could argue with the clergy who frequented the gardens, and who delighted in putting before him questions and difficulties.

The Señor Esteban, growing daily more bent and feeble, smiled delightedly before his last work; he was going to be the glory of his house! His name was Luna, and therefore he could aspire to anything without fear, because even Popes had come from that family.

The canons would take the boy into the sacristy after choir, and question him as to his studies. One of the clergy belonging to the archbishop's household presented him to the cardinal, who, after hearing him, gave him a handful of sugared almonds and the promise of a scholarship, so that he could continue his studies at the seminary gratuitously.

The Lunas and all their relations more or less distant, who were really nearly the whole population of the upper cloister, were rejoiced at this promise; what else could Gabriel be but a priest? For these people, attached to the church from the day of their birth, like excrescences of its stones, who considered the archbishops of Toledo as the most powerful beings in the world after the Pope, the only profession worthy of a man of talent was the Church.

Gabriel went to the Seminary, and to all the family the

Claverias seemed quite deserted. The long, pleasant evenings in the house of the Lunas came to an end, at which the bell-ringer, the vergers, the sacristans and other church servants had been used to assemble, and listen to the clear and well modulated voice of Gabriel, who read like an angel—sometimes the lives of the saints, at other times Catholic newspapers that came from Madrid, or chapters from a Don Quixote with pages of vellum and antiquated writing—a venerable copy which had been handed down in the family for generations.

Gabriel's life in the Seminary was the ordinary and monotonous life of a hard-working student: triumphs in theological controversies, prizes in heaps, and the satisfaction of being held up to his companions as a model.

Sometimes one of the canons who lectured in the seminary would come into the garden:—

"The lad is getting on very well, Esteban; he is first in everything, and besides, is as steady and pious as a saint. He will be the comfort of your old age."

The gardener, always growing older and thinner, shook his head. He should only be able to see the end of his son's career from the heavens, should it please God to call him there. He would die before his son's triumph; but this did not sadden him, for the family would remain to enjoy the victory and to give thanks to God for His goodness.

Humanities, theology, canons, everything, the young man mastered with an ease which surprised his masters, and they

compared him to the Fathers of the Church, who had attracted attention by their precocity. He would very soon finish his studies, and they all predicted that his Eminence would give him a professorship in the seminary, even before he sang his first mass. His thirst for learning was insatiable, and it seemed as though the library really belonged to him. Some evenings he would go into the Cathedral to pursue his musical studies, and talk with the Chapel-master and the organist, and at other times in the hall of sacred oratory he would astound the professors and the Alumni by the fervour and conviction with which he delivered his sermons.

"He is called to the pulpit," they said in the Cathedral garden. "He has all the fire of the apostles; he will become a Saint Bernard or a Bossuet. Who can tell how far this youth will go, or where he will end?"

One of the studies which most delighted Gabriel was that of the history of the Cathedral, and of the ecclesiastical princes who had ruled it. All the inherent love of the Lunas for the giantess who was their eternal mother surged up in him, but he did not love it blindly as all his belongings did. He wished to know the why and the wherefore of things, comparing in his books the vague old stories that he had heard from his father, that seemed more akin to legends than to historical facts.

The first thing that claimed his attention was the chronology of the archbishops of Toledo—a long line of famous men, saints, warriors, writers, princes, each with his number after his name,

like the kings of the different dynasties. At certain times they had been the real kings of Spain. The Gothic kings in their courts were little more than decorative figureheads that were raised or deposed according to the exigencies of the moment. The nation was a theocratic republic, and its true head was the Archbishop of Toledo.

Gabriel grouped the long line of famous prelates by characters. First of all the saints, the apostles in the heroic age of Christianity, bishops as poor as their own people, barefooted, fugitives from the Roman persecution, and bowing their heads at last to the executioner, firm in the hope of gaining fresh strength to the doctrine for which they sacrificed their lives—Saint Eugenio, Melancio, Pelagio, Patruno and other names that shone in the past scarcely breaking through the mists of legend. Then came the archbishops of the Gothic era; those kingly prelates who exercised that superiority over the conquering kings by which the spiritual power succeeded in dominating the barbarian conquerors. Miracles accompanied them to confound the Arians, and celestial prodigies were at their orders to terrify and crush those rude men of war. The Archbishop Montano, who lived with his wife, and was indignant at the consequent murmurs, placed red-hot coals in his sacred vestments the while he said mass, and did not burn, demonstrating by this miracle the purity of his life. Saint Ildefonso, not content with only writing books against heretics, induced Santa Leocadia to appear to him, leaving in his hands a piece of her mantle, and he enjoyed the further honour

of this same Virgin descending from heaven to present him with a chasuble embroidered by her own hands. Sigiberto, many years after, had the audacity to vest himself in this chasuble, and was in consequence deposed, excommunicated and exiled for his temerity.

The only books that were produced in those times were written by the prelates of Toledo. They compiled the laws, they anointed the heads of the monarchs with the holy oil, they set up Wamba as king, they conspired against the life of Egica, and the councils assembled in the basilica of Santa Leocadia were political assemblies in which the mitre was on the throne and the crown of the king at the feet of the prelate.

At the coming of the Saracen invasion the series of persecuted prelates begins again. They did not now fear for their lives as during the time of Roman intolerance; for Mussulmen as a rule do not martyr, and furthermore, they respect the beliefs of the conquered.

All the churches in Toledo remained in the hands of the Christian Muzarabés¹³ with the exception of the Cathedral, which was converted into the principal mosque.

The Catholic bishops were respected by the Moors, as were also the Hebrew rabbis; but the Church was poor, and the continual wars between the Saracens and the Christians, together with the reprisals which set a seal on the barbarities of the

¹³ : Muzarabés—Christians living among the Moors and mixing with them; also an ancient form of service still continued in one chapel in Toledo and in one at Salamanca.

reconquest, made the continuance and life of worship extremely difficult.

Having arrived at this point Gabriel read the obscure names of Cixila, Elipando and Wistremiro. Saint Eulogio termed this last "the torch of the Holy Spirit, and the light of Spain"; but history is silent as to his deeds, and Saint Eulogio was martyred and killed by the Moors in Cordova on account of his excessive religious zeal. Benito, a Frenchman who succeeded to the chair, not to be behind his predecessors, made the Virgin send him down another chasuble to a church in his own country before he came to Toledo.

After these, came the interesting chronology of the warrior archbishops, warriors of coat-of-mail and two-edged sword, the conquerors who, leaving the choir to the meek and humble, mounted their war-horses and thought they were not serving God unless during the year they added sundry towns and pasture lands to the goods of the Church. They arrived in the eleventh century, with Alfonso VI., to the conquest of Toledo. The first were French monks from the famous Abbey of Cluny, sent by the Abbot Hugo to the convent of Sahagun, and they were the first to use the "don" as a sign of lordship. To the pious tolerance of the preceding bishops, accustomed to friendly intercourse with Arabs and Jews in the full liberty of the Muzarabé worship, succeeded the ferocious intolerance of the Christian conqueror. The Archbishop Don Bernardo was scarcely seated in the chair before he took advantage of the absence of Alfonso VI. to violate

all his promises. The principal mosque had remained in the hands of the Moors by a solemn compact with the king, who, like all the monarchs of the reconquest, was tolerant in matters of religion. The archbishop, using his powerful influence over the mind of the queen, made her the accomplice of his plans, and one night, followed by clergy and workmen, he knocked down the doors of the mosque, cleansed it and purified it, and next morning when the Saracens came to pray towards the rising sun, they found it changed into a Catholic cathedral. The conquered, trusting in the word given by the conqueror, protested, scandalised, and that they did not rise was solely due to the influence of the Alfaqui Abu-Walid, who trusted that the king would fulfil his promises. In three days Alfonso VI. arrived in Toledo from the further end of Castille, ready to murder the archbishop and even his own wife for their share in this villainy that had compromised his word as a cavalier, but his fury was so great that even the Moors were moved, and the Alfaqui went out to meet him, begging him to condone the deed as it was accomplished, as the injured parties would agree to it, and in the name of the conquered he relieved him from keeping his word, because the possession of a building was not a sufficient reason for breaking the peace.

Gabriel admired as he read the prudence and moderation of the good Moor Abu-Walid; but with his enthusiasm as a seminarist he admired still more those proud, intolerant and warlike prelates, who trampled laws and people under foot for the greater glory of God.

The Archbishop Martin was Captain-General against the Moors in Andalusia, conquering towns, and he accompanied Alfonso VIII. to the battle of Alarcos. The famous prelate Don Rodrigo wrote the chronicle of Spain, filling it with miracles for the greater prosperity of the Church, and he practically made history, passing more time on his war-horse than on his throne in the choir. At the battle de las Navas he set so fine an example, throwing himself into the thick of the fight, that the king gave him twenty lordships as well as that of Talavera de la Reina. Afterwards, in the king's absence, he drove the Moors out of Quesada and Cazorla, taking possession of vast territories, which passed under his sway, with the name of the Adelantamiento.¹⁴ Don Sancho, son of Don Jaime of Aragon, and brother to the Queen of Castille, thought more of his title of "Chief Leader" than of his mitre of Toledo, and on the advance of the Moors went out to meet them in the martial field. He fought wherever the fighting was fiercest, and was finally killed by the Moslems, who cut off his hands and placed his head on a spear.

Don Gil de Albornoz, the famous cardinal, went to Italy, flying from Don Pedro the Cruel, and, like a great captain, reconquered all the territory of the Popes, who had taken refuge in Avignon. Don Gutierre III. went with Don Juan II. to fight against the Moors. Don Alfonso de Acuna fought in the civil war during the reign of Enrique IV.; and as a fitting end to this series of political and conquering prelates, rich and powerful as

¹⁴ : *Adelantamiento*—Advancement.

true princes, there arose the Cardinal Mendoza, who fought at the battle of Toro, and at the conquest of Granada, afterwards governing that kingdom; and Jimenez de Cisneros, who, finding no Moors left in the Peninsula to fight, crossed the sea and went to Oran, waving his cross and turning it into a weapon of war.

The seminarist admired these men, magnified by the mists of ancient history and the praises of the Church. For him they were the greatest men in the world after the Popes, and, indeed, often far superior to them. He was astonished that the Spaniards of the present times were so blind that they did not entrust their direction and government to the archbishops of Toledo, who in former centuries had performed such heroic deeds. The glory and advancement of the country was so intimately connected with their history, their dynasty was quite as great as that of the kings, and on more than one occasion they had saved these latter by their counsels and energy.

After these eagles came the birds of prey; after the prelates with their iron morions and their coats-of-mail came the rich and luxurious prelates, who cared for no other combats but those of the law courts, and were in perpetual litigation with towns, guilds, and private individuals in order to retain the possessions and the vast fortune accumulated by their predecessors.

Those who were generous like Tavera built palaces, and encouraged artists like El Greco, Berruguete and others, creating a Renaissance in Toledo, an echo from Italy. Those who were miserly, like Quiroga, reduced the expenses of the pompous

church, to turn themselves into money-lenders to the kings, giving millions of ducats to those Austrian monarchs on whose dominions the sun never set, but who, nevertheless, found themselves obliged to beg almost as soon as their galleons returned from their voyages to America.

The Cathedral was the work of these priestly ecclesiastics; each one had done something in it which revealed his character. The rougher and more warlike its framework, that mountain of stone and wood which formed its skeleton; those who were more cultivated, elevated to the See in times of greater refinement, contributed the minutely-worked iron railings, the doors of lace-like stonework, the pictures, and the jewels which made its sacristy a veritable treasure house. The gestation of the giantess had lasted for three centuries; it seemed like those enormous prehistoric animals who slept so long in their mother's womb before seeing the light.

When its walls and pilasters first rose above the soil Gothic art was in its first epoch, and during the two and a half centuries that its building lasted architecture made great strides. Gabriel could follow this slow transformation with his mind's eye as he studied the building, discovering the various signs of its evolution.

The magnificent church was like a giantess whose feet were shod with rough shoes, but whose head was covered with the loveliest plumes. The bases of the pillars were rough and devoid of ornament, the shafts of the columns rose with severe simplicity, crowned by plain capitals at the base of the arches,

on which the Gothic thistle had not yet attained the exuberant branching of a later florid period; but the vaulting which was finished perhaps two centuries after the first beginning, and the windows with their multi-coloured ogives, displayed the magnificence of an art at its culminating point.

At the two extreme ends of the transepts Gabriel found the proof of the immense progress made during the two centuries in which the Cathedral had been rising from the ground. The *Puerta del Reloj*¹⁵, called also *de la Feria*¹⁶, with its rude sculptures of archaic rigidity, and the tympanum, covered with small scenes from the creation, was a great contrast to the doorway at the opposite end of the crossway, that of *Los Leones*¹⁷, or by its other name, *de la Alegria*¹⁸, built nearly two hundred years afterwards, elegant and majestic as the entrance to a palace, showing already the fleshly audacities of the Renaissance, endeavouring to thrust themselves into the severity of Christian architecture, a siren fastened to the door by her curling tail serving as an example.

The Cathedral, built entirely of a milky white stone from the quarries close to Toledo, rose in one single elevation from the base of the pillars to the vaulting, with no triforium to cut its arcades and to weaken and load the naves with superimposed arches. Gabriel saw in this a petrified symbol of prayer, rising

¹⁵ *Reloj*—Clock.

¹⁶ *Feria*—Of the fair.

¹⁷ *Los Leones*—Lions.

¹⁸ *Alegria*—Joy.

direct to Heaven, without assistance or support. The smooth, soft stone was used throughout the building, harder stone being used for the vaultings, and on the exterior the buttresses and pinnacles, as well as the flying buttresses like small bridges between them, were of the hardest granite, which from age had taken a golden colour, and which protected and supported the airy delicacy of the interior. The two sorts of stone made a great contrast in the appearance of the Cathedral, dark and reddish outside, white and delicate inside.

The seminarist found examples of every sort of architecture that had flourished in the Peninsula. The primitive Gothic was found in the earliest doorways, the florid in those del Perdon and de los Leones, and the Arab architecture showed its graceful horseshoe arches in the triforium running round the whole abside of the choir, which was the work of Cisneros, who, though he burnt the Moslem books, introduced their style of architecture into the heart of the Christian temple. The plateresque style showed its fanciful grace in the door of the cloister, and even the chirruguesque showed at its best in the famous lanthorn of Tome, which broke the vaulting behind the high altar in order to give light to the abside.

In the evenings of the vacation Gabriel would leave the seminary, and wander about the Cathedral till the hour at which its doors were closed. He delighted in walking through the naves and behind the high altar, the darkest and most silent spot in the whole church. Here slept a great part of the history of Spain.

Behind the locked gates of the chapel of the kings, guarded by the stone heralds on pedestals, lay the kings of Castille in their tombs, their effigies crowned, in golden armour, praying, with their swords by their sides. He would stop before the chapel of Santiago, admiring through the railings of its three pointed arches the legendary saint, dressed as a pilgrim, holding his sword on high, and tramping on Mahomedans with his war-horse. Great shells and red shields with a silver moon adorned the white walls, rising up to the vaulting, and this chapel his father, the gardener, regarded as his own peculiar property. It was that of the Lunas, and though some people laughed at the relationship, there lay his illustrious progenitors, Don Alvaro and his wife, on their monumental tombs. That of Doña Juana Pimental had at its four corners the figures of four kneeling friars in yellow marble, who watched over the noble lady extended on the upper part of the monument. That of the unhappy constable of Castille was surrounded by four knights of Santiago, wrapped in the mantle of their Order, seeming to keep guard over their grand master, who lay buried without his head in the stone sarcophagus, bordered with Gothic mouldings. Gabriel remembered what he had heard his father relate about the recumbent statue of Don Alvaro. In former times the statue had been of bronze, and when mass was said in the chapel, at the elevation of the Host, the statue, by means of secret springs, would rise and remain kneeling till the end of the ceremony. Some said that the Catholic queen caused the disappearance of this theatrical statue, believing that

it disturbed the prayers of the faithful; others said that some soldiers, enemies of the constable, on a day of disturbance, had broken in pieces the jointed statue. On the exterior of the church the chapel of the Lunas raised its battlemented towers, forming an isolated fortress inside the Cathedral.

In spite of his family considering this chapel as their own, the seminarist felt himself more attracted by that of Saint Ildefonso close by, which contained the tomb of the Cardinal Albornoz. Of all the great past in the Cathedral, that which excited his greatest admiration was the romantic figure of this warlike prelate; lover of letters, Spanish by birth, and Italian by his conquests. He slept in a splendid marble tomb, shining and polished by age, and of a soft fawn colour; the invisible hand of time had treated the face of the recumbent effigy rather roughly, flattening the nose, and giving the warlike cardinal an expression of almost Mongolian ferocity. Four lions guarded the remains of the prelate. Everything in him was extraordinary and adventurous even to his death. His body was brought back from Italy to Spain with prayers and hymns, carried on the shoulders of the entire population, who went out to meet it in order to gain the indulgences granted by the Pope. This return journey to his own country after his death lasted several months, as the good cardinal only went by short journeys from church to church, preceded by a picture of Christ, which now adorns his chapel, and spreading among the multitude the sweet scent of his embalming.

For Don Gil de Albornoz nothing seemed impossible; he was

the sword of the Apostle returned to earth in order to enforce faith. Flying from Don Pedro the Cruel, he had taken refuge in Avignon, where lived exiles even more illustrious than himself. There were the Popes driven out of Rome by a people who, in their mediaeval nightmare, tried to restore at the bidding of Rienzi the ancient republic of the Consuls. Don Gil was not a man to live long in the pleasant little Provençal court; like a good archbishop of Toledo, he wore the coat-of-mail underneath his tunic, and as there were no Moors to fight he wished to strike at heretics instead. He went to Italy as the champion of the Church; all the adventurers of Europe and the bandits of the country formed his army. He killed and burnt in the country, entered and sacked the towns, all in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, so that before long the exile of Avignon was again able to return and occupy his throne in Rome. The Spanish cardinal after all these campaigns, which gave half Italy to the Papacy, was as rich as any king, and he founded the celebrated Spanish college in Bologna. The Pope, well aware of his robberies and rapacity, asked him to give some sort of accounts. The proud Don Gil presented him with a cart laden with keys and bolts.

"These," said he proudly, "belong to the towns and castles I have gained for the Papacy. These are my accounts."

The irresistible glamour that a powerful warrior throws over a man physically feeble was strongly felt by Gabriel, and it was augmented by the thought that so much bravery and haughtiness had been joined in a servant of the Church. Why could not men

like this arise now, in these impious times, to give fresh strength to Catholicism?

In his strolls through the Cathedral Gabriel greatly admired the screen before the high altar, a wonderful work of Villalpando, with its foliage of old gold, and its black bars with silvery spots like tin. These spots made the beggars and guides in the church declare that all the screen was made of silver, but that the canons had had it painted black so that it might not be plundered by Napoleon's soldiers.

Behind it shone the majestic decorations of the high altar, splendid with soft old gilding, and a whole host of figures under carved canopies representing various scenes from the Passion. Behind the altar and the screen the gilding seemed to spring spontaneously from the white walls, marking with brilliant lights the divisions between the stalls. Beneath highly-decorated pointed arches were the tombs of the most ancient kings of Castille, and that of the Cardinal Mendoza.

Under the arches of the triforium an orchestra of Gothic angels with stiff dalmatics and folded wings sang lauds, playing lutes and flutes, and in the central parts of the pillars the statues of holy bishops were interspersed with those of historical and legendary personages.

On one side the good Alfaqui Abu-Walid, immortalised in a Christian church for his tolerant spirit, on the opposite side the mysterious leader of Las Navas who, after showing the Christians the way to victory, suddenly disappeared like a divine envoy—

a statue of exceeding ugliness with a haggard face covered by a rough hood. At either end of the screen stood as evidences of the past opulence of the church two beautiful pulpits of rich marbles and chiselled bronze.

Gabriel cast a glance at the choir, admiring the beautiful stalls belonging to the canons, and he thought enthusiastically that perhaps some day he might succeed in gaining one to the great pride of his family. In his wanderings about the church he would often stop before the immense fresco of Saint Christopher, a picture as bad as it was huge—a figure occupying all one division of the wall from the pavement to the cornice, and which by its size seemed to be the only fitting inhabitant of the church. The cadets would come in the evenings to look at it; that colossus of pink flesh, bearing the child on its shoulders, advancing its angular legs carefully through the waters, leaning on a palm tree that looked like a broom, was for them by far the most noticeable thing in the church. The light-hearted young men delighted in measuring its ankles with their swords and afterwards calculating how many swords high the blessed giant could be. It was the readiest application that they could make of those mathematical calculations with which they were so much worried in the academy. The apprentice of the church was irritated at the impudence with which these dressed up popinjays, the apprentices of war, sauntered about the church.

Many mornings he would go to the Muzarabé Chapel,

following attentively the ancient ritual,¹⁹ intoned by the priests especially devoted to it. On the walls were represented in brilliant colours scenes from the conquest of Oran by the great Cisneros. As Gabriel listened to the monotonous singing of the Muzarabe priests he remembered the quarrels during the time of Alfonso VI. between the Roman liturgy and that of Toledo—the foreign worship and the national one. The believers, to end the eternal disputes, appealed to the "Judgment of God." The king named the Roman champion, and the Toledans confided the defence of their Gothic rite to the sword of Juan Ruiz, a nobleman from the borders of Pisuerga. The champion of the Gothic breviary remained triumphant in the fight, demonstrating its superiority with magnificent sword thrusts, but, in spite of the will of God having been manifested in this warlike way, the Roman rite by slow degrees became master of the situation, till at last the Muzarabé ritual was relegated to this small chapel as a curious relic of the past.

Sometimes in the evenings, when the services were ended and the Cathedral was locked up, Gabriel would go up to the abode of the bell-ringer, stopping on the gallery above the door del Perdon. Mariano, the bell-ringer's son, a youth of the same age as the seminarist, and attached to him by the respect and admiration his talents inspired, would act as guide in their excursions to the upper regions of the church; they would possess themselves of the key of the vaultings and explore that mysterious locality to

¹⁹ The Muzarabé ritual is still sung in Arabic both in Toledo and Salamanca.

which only a few workmen ascended from time to time.

The Cathedral was ugly and commonplace seen from above. In the very early days the stone vaultings had remained uncovered, with no other concealment beyond the light-looking carved balustrade, but the rain had begun to damage them, threatening their destruction, and so the Chapter had covered the Cathedral with a roof of brown tiles, which gave the Church the appearance of a huge warehouse or a great barn. The pinnacles of the buttresses seemed ashamed to appear above this ugly covering, the flying buttresses became lost and disappeared among the bare-looking buildings, built on to the Cathedral, and the little staircase turrets became hidden behind this clumsy mass of roofing.

The two youths climbing along the cornices, green and slippery from the rain, would mount to quite the upper parts of the building. Their feet would become entangled in the plants that a luxuriant nature allowed to grow amid the joints of the stones, flocks of birds would fly away at their approach; all the sculptures seemed to serve as resting-places for their nests, and every hollow in the stone where the rain-water collected was a miniature lake where the birds came to drink; sometimes a large black bird would settle on one of the pinnacles like an unexpected finial; it was a raven who settled there to plume his wings, and it would remain there sunning itself for hours; to the people who saw it from below it appeared about the size of a fly.

These vaultings caused Gabriel a strange impression; no one

could guess the existence of such a place in the upper regions of the building. He would walk through the forest of worm-eaten posts which supported the roof, through narrow passages between the cupolas of the vaulting that arose from the flooring like white and dusty tumours; sometimes there would be a shaft through which he could see down into the Cathedral, the depth of which made him giddy. These shafts were like narrow well-mouths at the bottom of which could be seen people walking like ants on the tile flooring of the church. Through these shafts were lowered the ropes of the great chandeliers, and the golden chains that supported the figure of Christ above the railing of the high altar. Enormous capstans showed through the twilight their cogged and rusty wheels, their levers and ropes like forgotten instruments of torture. This was the hidden machinery belonging to the great religious festivals; by these artifices the magnificent canopy of the holy week was raised and fastened.

As the sun's rays shone in between the wooden posts the dust of ages that lay like a thick mantel on the roof of the vaulting would rise and dance in them for a few seconds, and the huge old spiders' webs would wave like fans in the wind, while the footsteps of the intruders would occasion wild and precipitous scrambles of rats from all the dark corners. In the furthest and darkest corners roosted those black birds who by night flew down into the church through the shafts in the vaulting, and the eyes of the owls glowed with phosphorescent brilliancy, while the bats flew sleepily about sweeping the faces of the lads with their

wings.

The bell-ringer's son would examine the deposits dropped in the dust, and would enumerate all the different birds who took refuge in the summit of the mountains of stone: this belonged to the hooting owl, and that to the red owl, and this again to the raven, and he spoke with respect of a certain nest of eagles that his father had seen as a young man, fierce birds who had endeavoured to tear out his eyes, and who had so thoroughly frightened him that he had been obliged to borrow the gun belonging to the night watchers on each occasion that his duties took him to the roof.

Gabriel loved that strange world, harbouring above the Cathedral with its silence and its imposing solitude. It was a wilderness of wood, inhabited by strange creatures who lived unnoticed and forgotten under the roof-tree of the church. Truly the good God had a house for the faithful down below, and an immense garret above for the creatures of the air.

The savage solitude of the higher regions was a great contrast to the wealth of the chapel of the Ochava, full of relics in golden vessels and caskets of enamel and precious marbles, to the quantities of pearls and emeralds in the magnificent treasury, heaped up as though they had been peas, and to the elegant luxury of the wardrobe, full of rare and costly stuffs and vestments exquisitely embroidered with every colour of the rainbow.

Gabriel was just eighteen when he lost his father. The old gardener died quietly, happy in seeing all his family in the

service of the Cathedral and the good old tradition of the Lunas continued without interruption. Thomas, the eldest son, remained in the garden, Esteban, after serving many years as acolyte and assistant to the sacristans, was Silenciaro, and had been given the Wooden Staff and seven reals a day, the height of all his ambition; and as far as regarded the youngest, the good Señor Esteban had the firm conviction that he had begotten a Father of the Church, for whom a place in heaven was especially reserved at the right hand of God Omnipotent.

Gabriel had acquired in the seminary that ecclesiastic sternness that turns the priest into a warrior more intent on the interest of the Church than on the concerns of his family. For this reason he did not feel the death of his father very greatly; besides, much greater misfortunes soon occurred to preoccupy the young seminarist.

CHAPTER III

There was great excitement both in the Cathedral and in the seminary, everyone discussing from morning till night the news from Madrid, for these were the days of the September revolution. The traditional and healthy Spain, the Spain of the great historical tradition had fallen. The Cortes Constituyentes were a volcano, a breath from the infernal regions, to those gentlemen of the black cassock who crowded round the unfolded newspaper, and, if they found comfort and satisfaction in a speech of Maesterola's they would suffer the agonies of death at the revolutionary harangues, which dealt such terrible blows at the olden days. The clergy had turned their eyes towards Don Carlos, who was beginning the war in the northern provinces; the king of the Vascongados²⁰ mountains would be able to remedy everything when he came down into the plains of Castille. But years passed by, Amadeus had come and gone, they had even proclaimed a republic! And yet the cause of God did not seem to advance much, and Heaven seemed deaf. A republican deputy proclaimed a war against God, challenging Him to silence him; and so impiety stalked along immune and triumphant, and its eloquence flowed abroad like a poisonous spring.

Gabriel lived in a state of bellicose excitement—he forgot his books, he disregarded his future, he never thought now of

²⁰ Provinces of Alava, Guipuscoa, and the lordship of Biscay.

singing his mass. What would happen to his career now that the Church was in peril, and that the sleepy poetry of past ages, that had enveloped him from his cradle like a perfumed cloud of old incense and dried roses, was on the point of vanishing?

Often some of the pupils disappeared from the seminary, and the professors would reply to the inquiries of the curious with a sly wink.

"They have gone out—with the good sort. They could not see quietly what was happening—'child's play,' 'follies.'"

But nevertheless such follies made them smile with paternal satisfaction.

He thought to be himself among those who fled, as the world seemed to be coming to an end. In certain towns the revolutionary mob had invaded and profaned the churches; as yet they had not murdered any of the ministers of God as in other revolutions, but still the priests were unable to go about the streets in their cassocks for fear of being hooted and insulted. The remembrance of the archbishops of Toledo, those brave ecclesiastical princes, implacable warriors against the infidels, fired his warlike feelings. As yet he had never been away from Toledo, away from the shadow of its Cathedral; Spain seemed to him as vast as all the rest of the world put together, and he began to feel the ardent desire of seeing something new, of seeing closer all the wonderful things he had read about in his books, stirring within him.

One day he kissed his mother's hand, without feeling any very

great emotion towards the trembling and nearly blind old woman, for the seminary had for him more tender memories than the house of his fathers, smoked his last cigar with his brothers in the garden without revealing his intentions to them, and that night he fled from Toledo with a scapulary of the Heart of Jesus sewed into his waistcoat, and a beautiful silk scarf in his wallet, one of those worked by white hands in the convents of the city. The son of the bell-ringer went with him. They joined one of the insignificant bands who were devastating Murcia, but they soon went on to Valencia and Catalonia, anxious to perform greater exploits for the cause of God than merely stealing mules and extorting contributions from the rich.

Gabriel felt an intense delight in this wandering life, with its continual alarms owing to the proximity of the troops.

He had been made an officer at once, on account of his education, and because of the letters of recommendation that certain of the prebends of the Metropolitan Church had given him; letters lamenting greatly that a youth of so much theological promise should go and risk his life like a simple sacristan.

Luna enjoyed the free and lawless life of war with the zest of a collegian out of bounds; but he could not hide the feeling of painful disillusion that the sight of those armies of the Faith caused him. He had expected to find something akin to the ancient crusading expeditions: soldiers who fought for an ideal, who bent the knee before beginning the fight, so that God might be on their side, and who at night, after a hard-fought field, slept

the pure sleep of an ascetic; instead of which he found an armed mob, mutinous to their leaders, incapable of that fanaticism which rushes blindfold to death, anxious only that the war might last as long as possible, so that they might continue the life of lawless wandering at the expense of the country, which they considered the best life possible; people who at the sight of wine, women or plunder would disband themselves, hungering, turning against their leaders.

It was the ancient life of the horde, surging up through civilisation, the atavic custom of stealing the stranger's bread and women by force of arms, the ancient Celtiberic love of factions and internal strife, that only caught hold of a political pretext in order to revive.

Gabriel, with very rare exceptions, found none in those badly-armed and worse-clothed bands who fought with a fixed idea; they were adventurers who wished for war for the sake of war; visionaries anxious for fortune; country lads from the fields, who in their passive ignorance had joined the factions, just as they would have stayed at home if they had had better counsels; simple souls who firmly believed that in the towns they were burning and destroying God's ministers, and who had thrown themselves into the fray so that society should not lapse into barbarism.

The common danger, the misery of the interminable marches to deceive the enemy, the scarcity suffered in the barren fields and on the rough hilltops on which they took refuge, made them all equals, enthusiasts, sceptics or rustics. They all felt

the same desire to compensate themselves for their privations, to appease the ravenous beast they felt inside, awakened and irritated by a life of such sudden changes; as much by the wild abundance and plundering of a sack as by the distress endured in the long marches over interminable plains without ever seeing the slightest sign of life. On entering a town they would shout, "Long live religion," but on the slightest provocation they would do this, that and the other in the name of God and all the saints, not omitting in their filthy oaths to swear by everything most sacred in that same religion.

Gabriel, who soon became accustomed to this wandering life, ceased to feel shocked. The former scruples of the seminarist vanished, smothered under the crust of the fighting man, which became hardened with war.

The romantic figure of Doña Blanca, the king's sister-in-law passed before him, like a person in a novel; in her romantic energy this princess wished to emulate the deeds of the heroines of La Vendée, and mounted on a small white horse, her pistol in her belt, and the white scarf tied over her floating tresses, she put herself at the head of these armed bands, who revived in the centre of the Peninsula the strife of almost prehistoric times. The flutter of the dark riding-habit of this heroine served as a standard to the battalions of Zouaves, to the troop of French, German, and Italian adventurers, the scum of all the wars on the globe, who found it pleasanter to follow a woman anxious for fame than to enlist themselves into the foreign legion of Algeria.

The assault of Cuenca, the sole victory of the campaign, made a deep impression on Gabriel's memory; the troops of men wearing the scarf, after they had knocked down the ramparts as weak as mud walls, rushed like overflowing streams through the streets. The firing from the windows could not stop them, they rushed in pale, with discoloured lips and eyes brilliant with homicidal mania, the danger overcome, and the knowledge that they were at length masters of the place drove them mad; the doors of the houses fell under their blows, terrified men rushed out to be pierced with bayonets in the streets, and in the houses you could see women struggling in the arms of the assailants, striking them in the face with one hand, while with the other they struggled to retain their clothes.

Gabriel saw how the roughest of the mountaineers destroyed in the Institute all the apparatus of the Cabinet of Physical Science, breaking it in pieces. They were furious with these inventions of the evil one, with which they thought the unbelievers communicated with the Government of Madrid, and they smashed on the ground with the butt ends of their muskets, and trampled with their feet, all the gilt wheels of the apparatus, and all the discs and batteries of electricity.

The seminarist was delighted at all this destruction; he also hated, but it was with a calm, reflective hate bred in the seminary, all positive and material sciences, for the sum total of his reasoning was that they came perilously near to the negation of God; those sons of the mountains in their blessed ignorance, had

without knowing it done a great deed. Ah! if only the whole nation would imitate them! In former times there were none of these ridiculous inventions of science, and Spain was far happier. To live a holy life, the learning of the priests and the ignorance of the people was sufficient, for both together produced a blessed tranquillity; what did they want more? For so the country had existed for centuries, all through the most glorious period of its existence.

The war came to an end, the closely pursued rebels passed through the centre of Catalonia and were finally driven over the frontier, where they were compelled to give up their arms to the French custom-house officers. Many availed themselves of the amnesty, anxious to return to their own homes. Mariano, the bell-ringer, was one of these. He did not wish to live in a foreign land; besides, during his absence his father had died, and it was extremely probable that he might succeed to the charge of the Cathedral tower if he laid due stress on the merits of his family, his three years' campaigning for the sake of religion, and a wound he had received in his leg; he would really be able to compare himself with the martyrs for Christianity.

Gabriel preferred emigration. "He was an officer and therefore could not take the oath of allegiance to a usurping dynasty." This declaration he made with all the pride learnt in this caricature of an army, which emphasised all the ceremonies of ancient warfare, and who, ragged and shoeless as they were, with their swords by their sides, never failed to transmit orders

to each other as "high-born officer." But the real reason which prevented Luna from returning to Toledo was that he wished to follow the course of events, to see new countries and different customs. To return to the Cathedral would mean to remain there for ever, to renounce everything in life, and he, who during the war had tasted of worldly delights, had no desire to turn his back on them quite so soon; also he was not yet of age, so he had plenty of time before him in which to finish his studies; the priesthood was a sure retreat, but one to which he was in no hurry to return just at present; besides, his mother was dead, and his brother's letters told him of no alteration in the sleepy life of the upper cloister, beyond that the gardener was married and that the "Wooden Staff" was courting a girl in the Claverias, it being against all the good traditions of these people to ally themselves with anyone outside the Cathedral.

Luna lived for more than a year in the emigrants' cantonments; his classical education and the sympathy aroused by his youth smoothed his path to a certain extent; he talked Latin with the French abbés, who were delighted to hear about the war from the young theologian, and at the same time they taught him the language of the country. These friends procured for him Spanish lessons among the upper middle classes who were friendly to the Church. In these days of penury he was saved by his friendship with an old legitimist Countess, who invited him to spend several days in her country house, introducing the warlike seminarist to all the grave and pious friends at her assemblies as though he had

been a crusader newly returned from Palestine.

Gabriel's great desire was to go to Paris; his life in France had radically changed his ideas, he really felt as though he had fallen into a new planet. Accustomed to the monotonous life in the seminary, and to the nomadic existence during that mountainous and inglorious war, he was astonished at the material progress, the refinement of civilisation, the culture and the well-being of the people in France. He remembered now with shame his Spanish ignorance, all that Castilian phantasmagoria, fed by lying literature, that had made him believe that Spain was the first country in the world, and its people the noblest and bravest, and that all the other nations were a sort of wretched mob, created by God to be victims of heresy, and to receive overwhelming punishment each time that they ventured to interfere with this privileged country, which, though it eats little and drinks less, has yet produced the holiest saints and the greatest captains of Christendom.

When Gabriel could express himself fluently in French and had contrived to save a few francs for his journey, he went to Paris. A friendly abbé had procured him employment as corrector of proofs in a religious library close to Saint Sulpice. In this priestly quarter of Paris, with its hostels for the clergy and for religious families, as gloomy as convents, with its shops full of pious images, which flood the globe with varnished and smiling saints, was accomplished the great transformation of Gabriel.

This quarter of Saint Sulpice with its streets almost Spanish

in their silence and peacefulness, with the sisters in black veils gliding by the walls of the seminary, drawn by the sound of the bells, was for the Spanish seminarist what the road to Damascus had been for the Apostle. The French Catholicism, cultivated, reasoning and respectful to human progress, bewildered Gabriel, whose fierce Spanish bigotry had taught him to despise all profane science. There was only one true learning in the world, and that was theology. The other sciences were only toys, only fit to amuse the eternal infancy of humanity. To know God and to meditate on the greatness of His power, this was the only serious study to which men could devote themselves; machinery, the discoveries of the positive sciences, in fact everything which did not treat of divinity and the future life, was only a bagatelle for the amusement of fools and people of no faith.

The former seminarist, who from his earliest childhood had despised all human progress, was stupefied when he perceived how earnestly all French Catholicism spoke of it. In correcting the proofs of so many religious works he could not but notice the profound respect which this despised science inspired in the good French priests, men of such far superior culture to that of the canons down there. And moreover he noticed a certain humble shrinking in the representatives of religion when they came face to face with science—a desire to please, not to be censorious, to help on with their sympathy any conciliatory solutions, so that dogma should not fall to the ground, finding no place in the rapid march of events that was hurrying humanity into the future with

the whirl of its new discoveries. Entire books were written by eminent priests with the view of adjusting and bringing into line the revelations of the holy books and the discoveries of modern science, even at the risk of doing some violence to the former. The ancient and venerable Church that Gabriel had seen in his own country, immovable in its antiquated majesty, unwilling to move a single fold of its mantle for fear of losing some of the dust of ages, was stirring in France, endeavouring to renew itself, throwing on one side the ancient garments of tradition, like old rags that would turn it into ridicule, and stretching out its hands with almost despairing strength to catch hold of the modern achievements of science; the great enemy of yesterday, whose appearance had been ushered in with bonfires and shameful abjurations was triumphant to-day.

What had that fatal apple of Paradise contained, that after six thousand years of malediction that same Church had begun to venerate it, striving to make it forget its ancient persecutions? Why was religion, firm as a rock throughout the centuries, which had defied persecutions, schisms and wars, beginning to dissolve before the discoveries of a few men, and entering into that wild current which sought for the cause and explanation of everything? If it had the secular support of faith, why should it seek the assistance of reason to maintain its traditions and to justify its dogmas?

Gabriel felt the same fever of curiosity which had obliged him as a child to bend his back over the old volumes, bound

in parchment, in the library of the seminary; he wished to be acquainted with the mysterious perfume of that hated science which had so disturbed God's priests, and had made them indirectly deny the beliefs of nineteen centuries. He wished to know why the sacred books were being dislocated and tortured in order to explain by geological periods the creation which God had accomplished in six days. What danger did they hope to avoid by making the divinity appear before science in order to explain its acts and fit them into the decisions of the latter? Whence came the instinctive fear of the religious authors of roundly affirming miracles? attempting instead to justify them by intricate and tentative reasonings, without daring to adduce as the decisive proof the incomprehensibility of supernatural prodigies.

For the time being Gabriel abandoned the tranquil atmosphere of the religious library. His reputation as a humanist had reached the ears of an editor living near the Sorbonne, so, without leaving the left bank of the Seine, he moved into the Latin quarter to undertake the correction of proofs in Latin and Greek. He earned in this way twelve francs a day—far more than those canons of Toledo, who formerly had appeared to him as great dukes. He lived in a small inn for students near to the School of Medicine, and his vehement discussions at night with his fellow-lodgers over the smoke of their pipes taught him as much as the books of that hated science. Those students who lent him books, or who told him of those he should search for in his free hours in the

library on the hill of Saint Genevieve, laughed like pagans at the exalted ideas of the former seminarist.

For two years young Luna did little else but read; now and again he accompanied his friends in some escapade, throwing himself into the free and joyous life of the Quartier, wearing out the elbows of his sleeves on the tables of the beershops. The Mimi of Murger often passed before him, but less melancholy than the creation of the poet, and the ex-seminarist found his Sunday evening idylls in the woods surrounding Paris. But Gabriel was not of an amorous temperament; curiosity and the thirst for knowledge mastered him, and after these escapades from which he returned fresher, and with his brain keener, he threw himself with greater ardour into his studies.

History, true history, whose cold clearness contrasted so strongly with that intricate morass of miracles in the chronicles that he had read in his childhood, beat down the greater part of his beliefs. Catholicism was no longer for him the only religion, neither could he any longer divide the history of humanity into two periods, that before and that after the appearance in Judea of a handful of obscure men, who, spreading themselves over the world, preached a cosmopolitan morality drawn from the maxims of Orientals, and from the teachings of Greek philosophy.

Religions were for him human inventions, subject to the conditions of existence belonging to all organisms, its generous infancy capable of blind sacrifices, its self-contained and

masterful manhood, in which the early sweetness was changed by the authoritative imposition of its power, and its inevitable age, with a long agony, in which the sick man, guessing his speedy end, clings to life with all the energy of desperation.

His faith in Catholicism as the only religion disappeared completely; losing his belief in dogmas he lost also, by inevitable logic, that belief in the monarchy which had driven him to fight in the mountains, and he understood clearly now the history of his country without prejudices of race. The foreign historians showed him the sad fate of Spain, arrested in the most critical period of her development, when she was emerging young and strong during the most fertile period of the Middle Ages, by the fanaticism of priests and inquisitors, and the folly of some of her kings, who, with utterly inadequate means, wished to revive the empire of the Caesars, draining the country for this mad enterprise. Those people who had broken with the Papacy, turning their backs for ever on Rome, were far happier and more prosperous than that Spain, which slept like a beggar at the door of the Church.

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