

# New Mexico Quarterly

---

Volume 25 | Issue 2

Article 6

---

1955

## The Madness of Doctor Montarco

Miguel de Unamuno

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

---

### Recommended Citation

de Unamuno, Miguel. "The Madness of Doctor Montarco." *New Mexico Quarterly* 25, 2 (1955). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol25/iss2/6>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Quarterly* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

*Miguel de Unamuno*

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO

**I** FIRST MET DR. MONTARCO just after his arrival in the city. A secret attraction drew me to him. His appearance was obviously in his favor, and his face had an open and guileless look about it. He was tall, blond, robust, yet quick in movement. He immediately made a friend of everyone he knew, because if he was not to make a person his friend, he refrained from making him his acquaintance. It was difficult to know which of his gestures were natural and which were studied, so subtly had he combined naturalness and art. From this proceeded the fact that while there were some who criticised him for affectation and found his simplicity studied, others of us thought that whatever he did was natural and spontaneous. He himself told me later: "There are gestures which, natural enough to begin with, later become artificial after they have been repeatedly praised. And then there are other gestures which, though we have acquired them after hard work and even against our very nature, end by becoming completely natural and seem native to us."

This observation should be enough to show that Dr. Montarco was not, while he was still of sound mind, the extravagant personality which many claimed. Far from it. He was, on the contrary, a man who in conversation expressed discreet and judicious opinions. Only on rare occasions, and even then only with persons completely in his confidence (as I came to be), did he unbridle his feelings and let himself go; it was then he would indulge in vehement invective against the people who surrounded him and from whom he had to gain his livelihood. And thus was prefigured the abyss into which his spirit was finally to fall.

He was one of the most orderly and simple men I have ever known. He was not a "connoisseur" or collector of anything, not even of books, nor did I ever detect in him any monomania whatever. His practice, his home, and his literary work: these were his only preoccupations. He had a wife and two daughters, aged eight and ten, when he arrived in the city. He was preceded by a very good reputation as a doctor; nevertheless, it was no secret that he had been forced by his peculiar conduct to leave his native town. His greatest peculiarity, in the eyes of his medical colleagues, lay in the fact that although he was an excellent practitioner and very well versed in medical science and biology, and that although he was a voluminous writer, it never seemed to occur to him to write about medicine. As he told me once, in his characteristically violent manner: "Why must these idiots insist that I write of professional matters? I studied medicine simply to cure sick people and earn my living doing so. Do I cure them? I do; and therefore let them leave me in peace and spare me their nonsense, and let them keep out of my business. I earn my living as conscientiously as I can, and, once my living is made, I do with my life what I want, and not what these louts want me to do. You can't imagine what profound misery of a moral sort there is in the attempt, which so many people make, to confine everybody to a specialty. For my part, I find a tremendous advantage in living *from* one activity and *for* another. . . . You probably don't need to be reminded of Schopenhauer's justified denunciation of professional philosophers and busybodies."

A little while after arriving in the city, and after he had built up a better than average practice and had acquired the reputation of a serious, careful, painstaking and well-endowed doctor, a local journal published his first story, a story half-way between fantasy and humor, without descriptive writing and without a moral. Two days later I found him very upset; when I asked the reason, he burst forth: "Do you think I'm going to be able to resist the overwhelming pressure of the idiocy prevailing here? Tell me, do you think so? It's the same thing all over again,

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 147

exactly the same as in my town, the very same! And just as happened there, I'll end by becoming known as a madman. I, who am a marvel of calm. And my patients will gradually drop away, and I'll lose my practice. Then the dismal days will come again, days filled with despair, disgust, and bad temper, and I will have to leave here just as I had to leave my own town."

"But what has happened?" I was finally able to ask.

"What has happened? Simply that five people have already approached me to ask what I meant by writing the piece of fiction I just published, what I intended to say, and what bearing did it have. Idiots, idiots, and thrice idiots! They're worse than children who break dolls to find out what's inside. This town has no hope of salvation, my friend; it's simply condemned to seriousness and silliness, two blood sisters. People here have the souls of school-teachers. They believe no one could write except to prove something, or defend or attack some proposition, or from an ulterior motive. One of these blockheads asked me the meaning of my story and by way of reply I asked *him*: 'Did it amuse you?' And he answered: 'As far as that goes, it certainly did; as a matter of fact, I found it quite amusing; but . . . .' I left the last word in his mouth, because as soon as he reached this point in the conversation, I turned my back on him and walked away. That a piece of writing is amusing wasn't enough for this monster. They have the souls of school-teachers, the souls of school-teachers!"

"But, now . . ." I ventured to take up the argument.

"Listen," he interrupted, "don't you come at me with any more 'buts'. Don't bother. The infectious disease, the itch of our Spanish literature, is the urge to preach. Everywhere a sermon, and a bad sermon at that. Every little Christ sets himself up to dispense advice, and does it with a poker-face. I remember picking up the *Moral Epistle to Fabian* and being unable to get beyond the first three verses; I simply couldn't stomach it. This breed of man is totally devoid of imagination, and so all his madness is merely silly. An oyster-like breed—there's no use of

your denying it— oysters, that's what they are, nothing but oysters. Everything here savors of oyster beds, or ground muck. I feel like I'm living among human tubers. And they don't even break through the ground, or lift their heads up, like regular tubers."

In any case, Dr. Montarco did not take heed, and he went and published another story, more satirical and fantastic than the first. I recall Servando Fernández Gómez, a patient of Dr. Montarco, discussing it with me.

"Well sir," said the good Fernández Gómez, "I really don't know what to do now that my doctor has published his stories."

"How is that?" I asked him with some surprise.

"Frankly, it seems rather risky, putting oneself in the hands of a man who writes things like that."

"Come, now, he gives you good care as a doctor, doesn't he?"

"There's no question of that. I've no complaint on that score. Ever since putting myself in his hands, consulting with him and following his regimen, I'm much better and every day I notice a further improvement. Still, those pieces of his . . . he must not be well himself. He sounds as if he had a head full of crickets."

"Don't be alarmed, Don Servando. I have many dealings with him, as you know, and I've observed nothing at all wrong with him. He is a very sensible man."

"When one talks to him he answers appropriately enough and what he says is very sensible, but . . ."

"Listen, I'd rather have a man operate on me who had a steady hand and eye even if he did speak wildly (though Montarco doesn't do that either), than a man who was exquisitely proper, full of sententious wisdom and every kind of platitude, and then went ahead and threw my whole body out of joint."

"That may be. Still . . ."

The next day I asked Dr. Montarco about Fernández Gómez, and he responded dryly: "A constitutional fool!"

"What's that?"

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 149

"A fool by physiological constitution, *a nativitate*, congenital, irremediable."

"Sounds like the absolute and eternal fool."

"No doubt . . . for, in this area, an Absolute fool and a Constitutional one are the same thing; it's not as in politics, where the Absolutists and the Constitutionals are at opposite poles."

"He says your head must be full of crickets . . ."

"And his head, and those of his kind, are full of cockroaches. And cockroaches are merely mute crickets. At least mine can sing, or chirrup, or creak out something."

A short time later the doctor published his third tale; and this time the narrative was more pointed, full of ironies, mockery, and ill-concealed invective.

"I don't know whether you're doing the wisest thing by publishing these stories," I told him.

"By heaven, I have to. I simply have to express myself and work off my feelings. If I didn't write out these atrocities I'd end by committing them. I know well enough what I'm doing."

"There are some people who say that all this doesn't suit a man of your age, position, and profession . . ." I said by way of drawing him out.

At this, he jumped to his feet and exclaimed:

"Just as I told you, exactly what I've said a thousand times: I'll have to go away from here, or I shall die of hunger, or they'll drive me crazy, or all of these things together. Yes, that's it, all three at once: I shall have to leave, a madman, to die of hunger. And they talk about my position, do they? What do those block-heads mean by position? Listen, believe me, we shall never emerge from barbarism in Spain, never be more than fancy Moroccans, fancy and false, for we'd be better off being our simple African selves, until we stop insisting that our chief of state be illiterate, that he write not a word, not even a volume of epigrams, or some children's tales, or a farce, while he is in office. He risks his prestige by literacy, they say. Meanwhile, we risk

our history and our evolution with the opposite. How stupid and heavy-handed we are!"

Thus impelled by a fatal insight did Dr. Montarco set himself to combat the public sentiment of the city in which he lived and worked. At the same time he strove to be more and more conscientious and meticulous in his professional duties and in his civic and domestic obligations. He took extreme care to attend to his patients in every way, and to study their ills. He greeted every one with extreme affability; he was rude to no one. In speaking to a person he would choose the topic he thought most likely to interest them, seeking thus to please them. In his private life he continued to be the ideal, the exemplary, husband and father. Still, his tales continued to grow more fanciful and extravagant: such was the opinion of the multitude, who also thought he was straying further and further from the "normal," the "usual." And his patients were beginning to abandon him, creating a void around him. Whereupon his ill-concealed animosity became evident once more.

And this was not the worst of it, for a malicious rumor began to take form and to spread: he was said to be arrogant. Without foundation of any sort, it began to be whispered that the doctor was a haughty spirit, a man concerned only with himself, who gave himself airs and considered himself a genius, while he thought other people poor devils incapable of understanding him. I told him about this consensus of opinion, and this time, instead of breaking out into one of his customary diatribes, as I had expected, he answered me calmly:

"Haughty and proud am I? No! Only ignorant people, fools, are ever really haughty; and frankly, I don't consider myself a fool; my type of foolishness doesn't qualify me. If we actually could peer into the depths of each other's conscience like that! I know they think I am disdainful of others, but they are wrong. The truth is merely that I don't have the same opinion of them that they have of themselves. And besides—I might as well tell you what I'm really thinking—what is all this talk about pride

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 151

and striving for superiority worth anyway? For the truth is, my friend, that when a man tries to get ahead of others he is simply trying to save himself. When a man tries to drown out the names of other men he is merely trying to insure that his own be preserved in the memory of living men, because he knows that posterity is a close-meshed sieve which allows few names to get through to other ages. For instance, have you ever noticed the way a fly-trap works?"

"What do you mean? What kind of a . . . ?"

"One of those bottles filled with water, which in the country are set around to catch flies. The poor flies try to save themselves and, since there is no way out but to climb on the backs of others, and thus navigate on cadavers in those enclosed waters of death, a ferocious struggle takes place to see which one can win out. They do not in the least mean to drown each other; all they are trying to do is to stay afloat. Just so in the struggle for fame, which is a thousand times more terrible than the struggle for bread."

"And the struggle for life," I added, "is the same, too. Darwin . . ."

"Darwin?" he cut me off. "Do you know the book *Biological Problems* by William Henry Rolph?"

"No."

"Well, read it. Read it and you will see that it is not the growth and multiplication of a species which necessitates more food and which leads to such struggle, but rather that it is a tendency toward needing more and more food, an impulse to go beyond the purely necessary, to exceed it, which causes a species to grow and multiply. It is not an instinct toward self-preservation which impels us to action, but rather an instinct toward expansion, toward invasion and encroachment. We don't strive to maintain ourselves only, but to be more than we are already, to be everything. In the strong words of Father Alonso Rodriguez, that great man, we are driven by an 'appetite for the divine.' Yes, an appetite for the divine. 'You will be as gods!': thus it was the Devil tempted our first parents, they say. Whoever doesn't aspire to be



more than he is, will not be anything. All or nothing! There is profound meaning in that. Whatever Reason may tell us—that great liar who has invented, for the consolation of failures, the doctrine of the golden mean, the *aurea mediocritas*, the ‘neither envied nor envying’ and other such nonsense—whatever Reason may tell us—and she is not only a liar but a great whore—in our innermost soul, which we now call the Unconscious, with a capital U, in the depths of our spirit, we know that in order to avoid becoming, sooner or later, nothing, the best course to follow is to attempt to become all.

“The struggle for life, for the more-than-life, rather, is an offensive and not a defensive struggle. . . . In this Rolph is quite right. And I, my friend, do not defend myself; I am never on the defensive; instead I believe in the attack. I don’t want a shield, which would only weigh me down and hinder me. I don’t want anything but a sword. I would rather deliver fifty blows, and receive ten back, than deliver only ten and not receive any. Attack, attack, and no defense. Let them say what they want about me; I won’t hear them, I’ll take no notice, I will stop my ears, and if in spite of my precautions, word of what they say reaches me, I will not answer them. If we had centuries of time to spare, I would sooner be able to convince them that they are fools—and you may imagine the difficulty in doing that—than they would convince me I am mad or over-proud.”

“But this purely offensive system of yours, Montarco my friend . . .” I began.

“Yes, yes,” he interrupted me again, “it has its flaws. And even one great danger, and that is that on the day my arm weakens or my sword is blunted they will trample me under their feet, drag me about, and make dust of me. But before that happens they will have already accomplished their purpose: they will have driven me mad.”

And so it was to be. I began to suspect it when I heard him talk repeatedly about the character of madness, and to inveigh against reason. In the end, they would succeed in driving him mad.

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 153

He persisted in issuing his stories, fictions totally different from anything current at this time and place; and he persisted, simultaneously, in not departing one whit from the reasonable sort of life he outwardly led. His patients continued to leave him. Eventually, dire want made itself felt in his household. Finally, as a culmination to his troubles, he could no longer find a journal or paper to print his contributions, nor did his name make any headway or gain any ground in the republic of letters. It all came to an end when a few of us who were his friends took over responsibility for his wife and daughters, and arranged for him to go into an asylum. His verbal aggression had been growing steadily more pronounced.

I remember as if it were yesterday the first day I visited him in the asylum where he was confined. The director, Dr. Atienza, had been a fellow student of Dr. Montarco and manifested an affection and sympathy for him.

"Well, he is quieter these days, more tranquil than at the beginning," the director told me. "He reads a little, very little; I think it would be unwise to deprive him of reading matter absolutely. Mostly, he reads the *Quixote*, and, if you were to pick up his copy of the book and open it at random, it would almost certainly open to Chapter 32, of the Second Part, where is to be found the reply made by Don Quixote to his critic, the ponderous ecclesiastic who at the table of the duke and duchess severely reprimanded the knight-errant for his mad fancies. If you want, we will go and see him now."

And we did so.

"I am very glad that you've come to call," he exclaimed as soon as he saw me, raising his eyes from the *Quixote*, "I'm glad. I was just thinking and wondering if, despite what Christ tells us in the twenty-second verse of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, we are ever permitted to make use of the forbidden weapon."

"And what is the forbidden weapon?" I asked him.

"'Whosoever shall call his brother "Fool!" shall be liable to the fires of Gehenna.' You see what a terrible sentence that is. It

doesn't say whoever calls him assassin, or thief, or bandit, or swindler, or coward, or whoreson, or cuckold, or liberal; no, it says, whosoever shall call him a 'fool'. That, then, is the forbidden weapon. Everything can be questioned except the intelligence, wit and judgment of other people. When a man takes it into his head to have aspirations, to presume to some special knowledge or talent, it's even more complicated. There have been popes who, because they considered themselves great Latinists, would rather have been condemned as heretics than as poor Latinists guilty of solecisms. And there are weighty cardinals who take greater pride in the purity of their literary style than in being good Christians, and for them orthodoxy is no more than a consequence of literary purity. The forbidden weapon! Just consider the comedy of politics: the participants accuse one another of the ugliest crimes, they charge each other with grave offenses, but they are always careful to call each other eloquent, clever, well-intentioned, talented. . . . For, 'Whosoever shall call his brother a fool, shall be liable to the fires of Gehenna.' Nevertheless, do you know why we make no real progress?"

"Perhaps because we must carry tradition on our backs," I ventured to say.

"No, no. It's simply because it is impossible to convince the fools that they *are* fools. On the day on which fools, that is to say, mankind, become truly convinced that they are just that, fools, on that day progress will have reached its goal. Man is born foolish. . . . And yet whosoever calls his brother a fool shall expose himself to the fires of Gehenna. And expose himself to hell-fire he did, that grave clergyman, 'one of those who presume to govern great men's houses, and who, not being nobly born themselves, don't know how to instruct those that are, but would have the liberality of the great measured by the narrowness of their own souls, making those whom they govern stingy, when they pretend to teach them frugality. . . .'"

"Do you see," Dr. Atienza whispered to me, "he knows chapters 31 and 32 of the second part of our book by heart."

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 155

"He exposed himself to hellfire, I say," the poor madman went on, "this grave ecclesiastic who came out with the duke and duchess to receive Don Quixote, and who sat down at table with him, face to face while they ate. For, a little later, furious, stupidly envious, and animated by low passions decked out as high wisdom, this boor charged the duke with responsibility before Our Lord for the actions of this 'good man'. . . . *This good man*, the ridiculous and pompous cleric called Don Quixote, and then went on to call him Mister Fool. Mister Fool! and he the greatest madman of all time! But he condemned himself to hellfire for calling him that. And in hell he lies."

"Perhaps he is only in purgatory, for the mercy of God is infinite," I dared to say.

"But the guilt of the grave ecclesiastic—who clearly stands for our country in the book, and nothing else—is an enormous one, really enormous," he continued, ignoring my qualifying suggestion. "That ponderous idiot, a genuine incarnation and representative, if there ever was one, of that section of our population which considers itself cultured, that insufferable pedant, after rising peevishly from table and questioning the good sense of his lord, who was feeding him—though it is doubtful if he did anything to earn his keep—said: 'Well may fools be mad, when wise men celebrate their madness. Your Grace may remain with this pair, if you please, but for my part, as long as they are in this house, I shall keep to my quarters, and thus save myself the labor of reprehending what I can't mend.' And with that, 'leaving the rest of his dinner behind him, away he flung.' He went away; but not entirely, for he and his like still prowl about, classifying people as sane or mad, and deciding which persons are which. . . . It's scandalous and hypocritical, but these great judges call Don Quixote 'the sublime madman' in public—and another packet of phrases they have heard somewhere—and in private, alone with themselves, they call him Mister Fool. Don Quixote, who, in order to go off in pursuit of an empire, the empire of fame, left Sancho Panza the government of an Island! And what office

did Mister Fool keep for himself? Not even a ministry! And after all, why did God create the world? For His greater glory, they say, to make it manifest. And should we do less? . . . Pridel! Pridel! Diabolic pride! That's the cry of the weak and impotent. Bring them here, all those grave and ponderous gentlemen infected with common sense. . . ."

"Let's leave," Dr. Atienza whispered, "he is getting excited."

We cut short the visit with some excuse or other, and I took leave of my poor friend.

"He has been driven mad," Dr. Atienza said as soon as we were alone. "One of the wisest and sanest men I ever knew, and he has been driven mad."

"Why do you say that?" I asked. "Why 'driven'?"

"The greatest difference between the sane and the insane," he answered me, "is that the sane, even though they may occasionally have mad thoughts, neither express them nor carry them out, while the insane—unless they are hopeless, in which case they do not think mad thoughts at all—have no power of inhibition, no ability to contain themselves. Who has not thought of carrying out some piece of madness—unless he is a person whose lack of imagination borders on imbecility? But he has known how to control himself. And if he doesn't know, he evolves into a madman or a genius, to a greater or lesser extent of one or the other depending on his form of madness. It is very convenient to speak of 'delusions' in this connection, but any delusion which proves itself to be practical, or which impels us to maintain, advance, or intensify life, is just as real an emotion and makes as valid an impression as any which can be registered, in a more precise manner, by the scientific instruments so far invented for the purpose. That necessary store of madness—to give it its plainest name—which is indispensable for any progress, the lack of balance which propels the world of the spirit and without which there would be absolute repose—that is, death—this madness, this imbalance, must be made use of in some way or other. Dr. Montarco used it to create his fantastic narratives, and in doing so he

## THE MADNESS OF DOCTOR MONTARCO 157

freed himself from it and was able to carry on the very orderly and sensible life which he led. And really, those stories. . ."

"Ah!" I interrupted, "they are profoundly suggestive, they are rich in surprising points of view. I can read and re-read them because of their freshness, for I find nothing more tedious than to be told something in writing which I have already ruminated. I can always read stories like these, without a moral and without description. I have been thinking of writing a critical study of his work, and I entertain the hope that once the public is put on the right track they will finally see in them what they don't today. The public isn't as slow-witted or disdainful as we sometimes think; their limitation is that they want everything given them already masticated, predigested, and made up into capsules ready to be swallowed. Everyone has enough to do simply making a living and can't take the time to chew on a cud which tastes bitter when it is first put in the mouth. But a worthwhile commentary can bring out the virtues of a writer like Dr. Montarco, in whose work only the letter and not the spirit has so far been perceived."

"Well, his stories certainly fell on rocky ground," Dr. Atienza resumed. "His very strangeness, which in another country would have attracted readers, scared people away here. At every step of the way and confronted with the simplest things, people surfeited with the most didactic and pedantic junk asked insistently: 'Now what does he mean here, what is this man trying to say in this passage?' And then, you know how his patients all deserted him, despite the fact that he gave them perfect care. People began to call him mad, despite his exemplary life. He was accused of passions which, in spite of appearances, did not really dominate him. His writings were all rejected. And then, when he and his family found themselves in actual need, he gave way to mad talk and acts; and it was this madness which he had previously vented in his writings."

"Madness?" I interrupted.

"No, you're right. It wasn't madness. But, now, they have succeeded in making it turn into madness. I have been reading his

work since he has been here and I realize now that one of their mistakes was to take him for a man of ideas, a writer of ideas, when fundamentally he is no such thing. His ideas were a point of departure, mere raw material, and had as much importance in his writing as earth used by Velasquez in making the pigments had to do with his painting, or as the type of stone Michelangelo used had to do with his *Moses*. And what would we say of a man who, equipped with a microscope and reagent, went to make an analysis of the marble by way of arriving at a judgment of the *Venus de Milo*? At best, ideas are no more than raw material, as I've already said, for works of art, or philosophy, or for polemics."

"I have always thought so," I said, "but I have found this to be one of the doctrines which meets with the most resistance on the part of the public. I remember that once, in the course of watching a game of chess, I witnessed the most intense drama of which I have ever been spectator. It was a truly terrible spectacle. The players did no more than move the chessmen, and they were limited by the canons of the game and by the chessboard; nevertheless, you can not imagine what intensity of passion there was, what tension of truly spiritual nature, what flow of vital energy! Those who only followed the progress of the game thought they were attending an everyday match, for the two players certainly played without great skill. For my part I was watching the way they picked out the chessmen and played them; I was attentive to the solemn silence, the frowns on the players' brows. There was one move, one of the most ordinary and undistinguished no doubt, a check which did not eventuate in a checkmate, which was nevertheless most extraordinary. You should have seen how the one player grasped his knight with his whole hand and placed him on the board with a rap, and how he exclaimed 'Check!' And those two passed for two commonplace players! Commonplace? I'm certain that Morphy or Philidor were more so. . . . Poor Montarcol!"

"Yes, poor Montarcol! And today you have heard him speak more or less reasonably. . . . Rarely, only rarely, does he talk complete extravagance. When he does, he imagines he is a grotesque

character whom he calls the Privy Counsellor Herr Schmarotzender; he puts on a wig which he has found somewhere, gets up on a chair, and makes a wild speech—full of spirit, however, and in words which somehow echo all the longing and eternal seeking of humanity. At the end, he gets down and asks me: 'Don't you think, Atienza, my friend, that there is a good deal of truth, basically, in the ravings of the poor Privy Counsellor Herr Schmarotzender?' And, in fact, it often strikes me that the feeling of veneration accorded madmen in certain countries is quite justified."

"You know, it seems to me that you should give up the management of this place."

"Don't concern yourself, my friend. It's not that I believe that the veil of a superior world, a world hidden from us, is lifted for these unfortunates; it's simply that I think they say things we all think but don't dare express because of timidity or shame. Reason, which we have acquired in the struggle for life and which is a conservative force, tolerates only what serves to conserve or affirm this life. We don't understand anything but what we must understand in order to live. But who can say that the inextinguishable longing to survive, the thirst for immortality, is not the proof, the revelation of another world, a world which envelops, and also makes possible, our world? And who can say that, when reason and its chains have been broken, such dreams and delirium, such frenzied outbursts as Dr. Montarco's, are not desperate leaps by the spirit to reach this other world?"

"It seems to me, and you will forgive my bluntness in saying so, that instead of your treating Dr. Montarco, Dr. Montarco is treating you. The speeches of the Privy Counsellor are beginning to affect you adversely."

"It may be. The only thing I am sure of is that every day I immerse myself deeper in this asylum; for I would rather watch over madmen, than have to put up with fools. The only trouble, really, is that there are many madmen who are also fools. But now I have Dr. Montarco to devote myself to. Poor Montarco!"

"Poor Spain!" I said. I extended my hand and we parted.



DR. MONTARCO did not last long in the asylum. He was gradually overcome by a profound melancholy, a crushing depression, and finally sank into an obstinate state of muteness. He emerged from his silence only to murmur: "All or nothing. . . . All or nothing. . . . All or nothing. . . ." His illness deepened and ended in death.

After his death, the drawer to his desk yielded a bulky manuscript whose title page read:

**ALL OR NOTHING**

*I request that on my death this manuscript  
be burned without being read.*

I don't know whether Dr. Atienza resisted the temptation to read it; or whether, in compliance with the madman's last wish, he burned it.

Poor Dr. Montarco! May he rest in peace, for he deserved both peace and final rest.

*—Translation by Anthony Kerrigan*