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E S C U A L D U N A C .

Basque Peasant Tales

by

Mayi Elissague.

Transl. Oswald Allen

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E S C U A L D U N A C

by

Mayi Elissague.

To the Lord and Lady of the Manor of Mocanech Pertal, near the Farmstead of Mouchiou Gourri and the Frontiers of Spain.

This translation of Basque peasant tales is affectionately offered by the translator, with many apologies for its bad typing, in memory of a happy visit to the Villa Napolitaine, St. Jean de Luz during September 1930.

It was then that he saw the first steps taken to realise a plan that had long been dear to the hearts of those to whom these lines are addressed: and it was the writer's good fortune to be associated in a small way with the finding of HANDKERCHIEF CORNER.

May Escualdunac - or this translation, if thought worthy - find its place on the bookshelves of the dream house when built, so that those who

may

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may be privileged to visit it and the Basques for the first time may learn a little of the manner and rugged worth of the people amongst whom their host and hostesshave chosen to dwell.

London,

Christmas Day 1930.

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ESCUALDUNAC.

C O N T E N T S .

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1. The Inheritance .

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THE INHERITANCE .

"Ah! gaizoa! what good games of pelota we had in those far-off days! They were good days but how long ago it all seems." Thus observed the Abbé Barnatéguy in his gruff but genial tones, as he dipped one hand into his snuff box, taking out his immense blue and yellow handkerchief with the other, to blow his nose vigorously.

"Yes, they were a long time ago," agreed Don Joaquin Alzate, who was standing close to the window, gazing attentively into the street, "All the same," he continued, "I find it hard to believe that I have ever been away, so many things have hardly changed since then. The houses haven't altered, nor the village stores with the red and green sweets, the toffee and pelota balls in the window. And isn't that dog now asleep in the doorway of the bakery our old friend Captain who used to frighten us so when we were youngsters? I've hardly been back two days and yet every time the church bells ring, when I see the earth shimmering under the radiant sun and the blue mountains around us, I seem never to have left the place."

"Yes, Barnatéguy," he went on, "those two lads now playing pelota might be you and me, and the cattle driver now crossing the square my poor old father."

Don Joaquin, having thus delivered himself, sat down with a sigh, casting a glance, as he did so, over the worn curtains and heavy furniture of the room, the high-backed chairs, old clock, oil

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lamps, and the pot of geraniums on the window-sill. "Yes, thirty years have gone by, thirty long years of exile," he added softly, as he drew two puffs of his puro (Mexican pipe).

"Do you regret it?" asked the Abbé, a trifle mischievously.

"Valgame Dios, certainly not! I've had a very good time over there, my friend. By 'good' I don't mean idle, let me say, as is proved by the substantial fortune I've brought back. For those who are enterprising and strong Mexico is the King of Countries."

"Still, we shouldn't forget our own land." said the Abbé, as he helped himself to another pinch of snuff.

"Forget it! Quite the reverse!" rang out the Mexican's pleasant musical tones. "Over there, one is really proud of being Eskualdun-Fededun (a Basque and a good Christian). Over there, one really appreciates the beauty of our traditions and the strength of our ancient race."

"No. I can never sufficiently express my joy on seeing Ithurigorry again and at being able to make the acquaintance of my nephews. That reminds me," added Don Joaquin looking at his watch, "the young people won't be much longer before they are here. So, before we all sit down to dinner, tell me, Barpatéguy, something of my young relations of whom I know so little."

"They are good lads," observed the Abbé seriously, "especially your brother's boys, Mattin and Jean-Pierre of Halzadiko-borda. They live at home with their mother and get on well together, doing a little bit of smuggling now-and-again. The third lad,

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Inacio d'Arbelaïnea, your sister Pascaline's son, is not quite such a good fellow, being a bit too fond of gay company. Still, he's only twenty-three and youth will have its day!"

"That's what my sister Chaadin says. She leads a very retired life in this little house but she sees a lot of what goes on outside and knows which of her nephews go to Mass regularly and which of them go on the spree!" "Dear old Chaadin," continued Don Joaquin, as he saw the Abbé smile, "how glad she was to see me back again! But I think our guests are here." Footsteps were heard approaching and hearty voices greeted André Chaadin.

"Come along, children," cried Don Joaquin, rising quickly. His bronzed face paled with emotion as he embraced in turn each of his nephews, drawing them to him with one arm and patting them gently on the back with his free hand.

The young men felt a little awkward under this Mexican form of embrace and the first meeting was thus a little embarrassing to natures so little prone to effusion as the Basques'. It was not long, however, before the friendliness of Don Joaquin and the smiling good humour of Abbé Barnatéguy put them at their ease. Aunt Chaadin appeared with the soup and made her brother and his guests take their places at table before she herself went back to the kitchen. In vain did Don Joaquin try to keep her at the table: almost upset by the idea, the old lady energetically refused.

Conversation became most cordial as the meal progressed. Don Joaquin never ceased to ask questions about Halzadiko-borda, the countryside, the crops, his old friends, and to listen to

(+ Aunt)

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the replies of his nephews, watching them carefully all the time with his sparkling, dark eyes.

Mattin of Halzadiko-borda, the eldest of the three, was thirty years of age. Broad-shouldered, ruddy-complexioned and keenly observant, he contributed to the conversation the cautious remarks of a countryman who knows the value of every word and is not given to speaking at random or disclosing his whole mind on any subject. He was the only one of the three nephews to be married and had one little daughter.

His brother, Jean-Pierre, was a taller, thinner man, with a bronzed, stern face, a prominent nose, and a rather severe but straightforward expression. He sat stiffly on his chair, and his few, brief utterances were to reply to questions addressed to him.

Inacio d'Arbelaïnea was in striking contrast to his cousins. Of jovial countenance, he was soon on good terms with everybody, being an easy conversationalist and having an attractive personality.

Although he at once took a liking to each of the three young men, the uncle was most pleased with Inacio. But the Abbé Barnatéguy's favourite was Mattin, whose cautious outlook appealed to him.

Conversation turned to Mexico and, once on this subject, there was no risk of its flagging. With an amusing want of logic, Don Joaquin, who in Mexico had never ceased to think of the Basque Country with emotion and regret, now that he had come back home could speak of nothing but his fondness for the land across the seas.

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With a far-away look and a tremor of the lip that his iron-grey moustache could not hide, he took pleasure in describing that fabulous country wherein he had struggled so well and his youth had been spent in search of a home, friends, a career and so many wonderful adventures.

It was not until coffee and cognac had taken the place of the dish of toasted cheese on the table that Don Joaquin decided to tell his nephews why he had invited them to come to see him and what his intentions were in regard to each of them.

"I am not like one of those American uncles," he began, "who waits until he is dead to make other people happy. You are my heirs but you mustn't wait until you are old men for what is coming to you. I hope to live a good many years longer and I want to be a greatly beloved, petted and pampered Osaba, not an old man for whose death everyone is eagerly waiting. Hence I have made up my mind to hand over to you now what I might have left you later."

"Oh uncle!" Mattin interrupted.

Don Joaquin silenced him with a smile and went on.

" I will not hide from you the fact that the money which I intend to give you now forms only a part of my fortune. Every cent of it was made too laboriously for me to part with it all quite so readily as that, but this you should know: none of you will now have any claim on the balance of my money and I reserve to myself the right to dispose of it in whatever way I please. Will you be satisfied if I give each of you one hundred thousand francs?"

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"Osaba," repeated Mattin softly, blushing scarlet.

Jean Pierre said nothing but turned a questioning glance on his uncle who, by this time, was as much moved as his nephews. The old man drew three cheques from his pocket. "Here is your money, my children," he said. "You may spend it as you like, without restrictions. Let me, however, remind you of one thing. The money came to me as a result of honest toil and I feel sure that none of you will disgrace it." Don Joaquin then changed the conversation.

At the close of the meal the young peasants took their leave. Ignacio expressed his heartfelt thanks to his uncle in well-chosen phrases. Jean Pierre could only grasp his uncle heartily by the hand, - so heartily that the old man's fingers ached for some time after. As for Mattin, tears of joy came to his eyes and when at last he let go of his uncle's hand, he began to shake hands with the Abbé.

The rays of the setting sun fell in orange stripes across the plane trees as, standing side by side at the window, Don Joaquin and his friend watched the three men disappear into the mauve shadows of the distance. "What I did not tell them," remarked the 'American' to his friend, "is that my fortune will never pass out of the family and that one or other of them is destined to inherit the money. We shall see in the course of time the use each nephew makes of his cheque and thus discover which is most worthy. What is your opinion, Barnatéguy?"

The Abbé, not wishing to commit himself, shook his head but his glance followed Mattin who, with easy footsteps, was taking

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he road to Halzadiko-borda. Gaizo! (Glory be!)" he said softly, Mattin is going straight home with the good news."

II.

"Hallo! Mattin, how much are you staking?"

Mattin of Halzadiko-borda turned round and smiled broadly at the Abbé Barnatéguy, shaking his head. "Nothing at all, Jaun Erretora (M. le Curé)," he replied. "The father of a family mustn't risk his money in betting."

"Well! Well! No doubt you are right," agreed the good priest, patting the young man on the shoulder and taking a seat besides him to watch the game.

The sun streamed in through the great windows of the hall through which could be seen the bright green of a meadow and the cluster of red roofs of the village. Merciless and dazzling its burning rays pierced the heavy atmosphere, blue and acrid with the smoke of cigarettes. The rafters rang with laughter and shouts and the noise of arguments and challenges. From the gallery the faces of the clean-shaven spectators looked down on the pelota players. Farmworkers, bourgeois, afficionados, tratularis,- all alike had the same tense expression under their little berets.

It was seldom that market days saw such a match as had been arranged between the two champions of Saint Pée, Jean Baptiste and Manech, and Laurench l'Espeletar and Jean-Pierre of Halzadico-borda. The pride of having in their midst four such players was thus added to the never-failing pleasure which the good folk of Ithurrigorri derived from watching a game of pelota. Through the length and breadth of Labourd the champions' strength, skill,

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agility and keen play were justly celebrated. But while the two Sempertars (men of Saint Pée) were playing their usual swift and agile game, never failing to hit the ball, Laurench was nervous and made frequent misses. He had not removed his beret and after each miss he thrust it further back over his thick head of hair. In an effort to save the game his partner, Jean Pierre, darted all over the place, heaping the strongest invective on Laurench by way of encouragement. The shouts of supporters resounded on every side.

"Emak hor! (Play-up)! Jean-Pierre."

"Ederki! (Bravo!) Jean Baptiste."

Those who had money on the game were now almost in tears. The youngsters in the crowd were yelling at the top of their voices, the loose boards on which the spectators sat creaked, and the heat was suffocating.

The Abbé Barnatéguy, wiping the perspiration from his face with a snuff-stained handkerchief, positively shook with excitement. His earnest hope was that Jean Pierre might win. He knew that that the young man, notwithstanding his serious demeanour, was a heavy gambler. If only his play could save the situation!.

But this was not to be. Laurench grew more and more clumsy and got so angry with himself that in despair he threw off his beret and tore his hair. Their side lost.

A terrific din thereupon ensued. The spectators crowded down the creaking staircase leading from the gallery to the street and broke up into little groups as they made their way in the dazzling sunlight along the dusty roads.

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"Are you going back to the Presbytery, Jaun-Erretora?" asked the faithful Mattin of the good abbé as the two left the building together?

"No, friend. I am going to see old Magnagna, who is ill."

"I'll come with you then, as I want to tell you something."

Mattin did not speak again until they had gone some distance and had come to a deserted road where they could not be overheard. "I wanted to let you know that I'm leaving here." he resumed.

"You surely are not going to leave us?"

"Yes, I am. I intend to move to Bordeaux."

Bordeaux! The Abbé Barnatéguy looked at Mattin with astonishment.

" I have bought a little hotel there, quite a modest little place," Mattin explained. "It has a good clientèle, however, chiefly amongst Basques," he went on. "But you must not think that I am going from here without a good many regrets."

"I, too, shall be sorry to lose one of my best parishioners" observed the abbé in grieved tones.

Mattin sighed deeply but was soon in the thick of a very detailed account of the purchase of his hotel. When Uncle Joaquin had given him the money, he and his wife had given much thought of how to make the best use of it. They must work hard for the benefit of their little Dominica and any other little brothers or sisters she might have. Mattin's sister-in-law had told them that the Hotel de Californie - that was its name - was for sale. The price had seemed reasonable and, after all,

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Bordeaux was not very far away. Moreover, it would be much easier to educate their little girl in a big city..Further, Jean Pierre would soon be gettingmarried and with two establishments at Halzadiko-borda, there would certainly be disagreements. So Mattin had thought it better to sell his share of the farm to his brother.

These excellent reasons, combined with Mattin's obvious eagerness, succeeded in convincing the Abbé. He shook hands with the peasant and wished him luck. When Mattin had left him, he let his prayer-book remain in his pocket and allowed his thoughts to turn to the widely differing tastes of Don Joaquin's three nephews. Inacio had been away for a fortnight in Spain, where he had let it be generally known before departing that he intended to enjoy himself. Always careless, reflected the abbé. As for Jean Pierre, the Abbé Barnatéguy sighed as he thought of him. As he had left the Trinquet (Pelota) the good priest had noticed the young pelota player surrounded by a noisy group. With his coat thrown over his shoulders and a red and yellow handkerchief knotted round his throat, his face scarlet-red, he was paying out his losings. The Abbé had heard the rustle of banknotes in Jean Pierre's brown fingers. Poor money, so painfully toiled for by Don Joaquin! What would the new owner of Halzadiko-borda do with it?

What would Don Joaquin himself have to say? Some weeks ago the 'American' had left to take a cure and was then going to travel for some time. Many months must pass before he was due back at Ithurrigorry.

And Andre Chaadin (Aunt Chaadin), what was she doing amid

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all these comings and goings? The Abbé still remembered her anxious, frightened face the day she had left. For Don Joaquin would not agree that they should separate. In vain she had pleaded her age and settled habits. Through her protests her real wishes and secret curiosity had been detected, and though she had started on her travels with many lamentations and ostensibly by force, in her heart of hearts she was delighted to be going. The Abbé was looking forward to hearing her impressions and also to asking Don Joaquin to which of his nephews he had decided to leave the money.

His natural kindness of heart and charitable disposition made him shake his head sadly as his thoughts fell upon Inacio and Jean Pierre. Then, forcing himself to expel from his mind the idle reflections which were obsessing him and concentrating his gaze upon the beautiful landscape, whose warm colours seemed almost to come to life in the brilliant sunshine, M. l'abbé Barnatéguy opened his breviary.

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"There goes the American from Halzadico-borda". Don Joaquin often heard this comment made in undertones as he crossed the square of Ithurrigorry, cane in hand and beret pushed well back over his grey hair. He smiled to himself whenever he heard it as it gave him pleasure to be referred to as belonging to the old farm, far more than to being known as Don Joaquin Alzate. Poor little farmhouse, so dear to his heart! What would happen to it now that Jean Pierre owned it?

Don Joaquin confessed to himself that he had been very sorry when the careful and industrious Mattin had gone to

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to Bordeaux: under his care the family estate would not have been likely to come to any harm.

Since his return the American had asked Abbé Barnatéguy many questions about Jean Pierre but, as in Mattin's case, the Abbé had hesitated to express any definite opinion. "He does a lot of smuggling but he's such a good fellow," was all that he could be made to say.

On this particular morning Don Joaquin was hastening to Halzadiko-borda. How beautiful and dignified the red and white house looked, despite its age, in the shelter of the great elms that had given the farm its name. Accompanied by his sister-in-law, Chanetta, who was alone in the house at the time, Don Joaquin went through the place from end to end, through the smoky kitchen to the stable and the hay-loft. His desire was to see the old place once again as he had known it in his boyhood, before Jean Pierre made any alterations.

Chanetta shook her head at the mention of alterations. "Jean Pierre won't want to do any," she said, "though Heaven knows, the stable ought to be enlarged and a new bread oven put in!"

"Your uncle and I have been thinking that you will be doing up the place a bit now, Jean Pierre," she told her son as he came in.

"Our ancestors found it satisfactory as it is, Mother. If it did for them it should for us," he replied. Don Joaquin, even if he had wished to do so, would not have known how to meet an argument so convincing to every true Basque. "Besides," Jean Pierre continued, hanging his head, "I shall shortly be increasing my expenditure. I wanted to tell you, uncle, that

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I'm getting married."

"Valgame Dios! and who is the happy woman"? asked his delighted uncle.

"Anicha, the shoemaker's daughter.... We have long been fond of each other," he added shyly.

Jean Pierre as the new proprietor took his uncle round the place. His manner was agreeable, if somewhat reserved, and Don Joaquin felt that, hidden under his nephew's description of the state of the land and the potatoes and the vine which he was about to train, there was a real if clumsily expressed gratitude. The old gentleman was greatly pleased with his discovery and as he retraced his footsteps to Ithurrigorry he turned back more than once to look across the meadows, over the daisies swaying in the South wind, at the vine-clad slopes. There, working with his men, stood Jean Pierre in a red gerrico (belt) with a bunch of yellow osiers strung over his shoulder. How often had Don Joaquin seen his father working thus?

III.

"Well, Don Inacio, how do you like your new life?"

"Very much indeed, Uncle. San Sebastien is a delightful town. I've got several little affairs and some good friends here, and can never forget that I owe everything to you."

Making no reply, Don Joaquin began to peel an orange. Each time he noticed Ignacio's long hair, smart town clothes, his rather too conspicuous cuff-links,- every time the young man spoke in the very superior tones he now affected, the older man thought of the young peasant of scarcely a year ago. It seemed to him

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that Inacio, the man about town, was infinitely more vulgar than Inacio, the peasant, the close-cropped, collarless young man in a tiny beret whom he had once known.

Inacio, however, was very clearly not of this opinion. Sprawling in a chair and holding a cigar between his fingers, he was very obviously enjoying the luxury of his surroundings and the fragrant fruits and choice wines. Staring all the time at his neighbours he talked Spanish volubly and with affectation. "You will excuse me, Uncle," he said at the close of the meal, "if I do not spend the evening with you but I have an important business engagement..."

"No te molestes hijo! (Don't apologise, my son!) replied Don Joaquin. As soon as the young man had left him, he went to the window to look out. The orange coloured lights of the Concha and the dark clumps of tamaris lay spread out before him. The casino below was bright with illuminations. The waves dashed against the breakwater and snatches of conversation mingled with bursts of laughter. Don Joaquin watched his nephew go out of the hotel and move away with a song on his lips. A business engagement at this time of the night seemed odd and yet Inacio was hurrying along like a man pressed for time. Don Joaquin followed him with his eyes and saw him enter .... the Casino.

A ship's syren sounded above the dashing of the waves and to the American its monotonous note sounded infinitely sad.

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"Have we arrived, Joaquin?"

Andre Chaadin awoke with a start as the train drew in to Be-

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Bordeaux station. She no longer feared a journey. In fact, she was delighted with the idea of spending a few days with Mattin and his family and making the acquaintance of the new baby, a dear little girl to whom her brother was to stand godfather.

Don Joaquin, finding it difficult to get over his deception at San Sebastien, was only to glad to seek consolation in a visit to a good fellow like Mattin. As he helped Chaadin to get down from the compartment he was looking in vain through the crowd for his nephew's round face and beret when he heard his sister exclaim, "Gaizoa, here is Mattin!"

Don Joaquin turned round and stood speechless before a typical bourgeois in a bowler hat and overcoat. Mattin! Was this really Mattin? Yes, but a Mattin transformed by a close-cut, dark brown moustache, a fat, vulgar red-faced townsman, a complete caricature of the peasant of former days. The old, affectionate smile was still there, however, and he seemed delighted to see his uncle and aunt again. He hurried them out of the station into a cab and Don Joaquin soon forgot the first impression of unpleasantness that the meeting had given him. As they drove away he listened attentively to his nephew's talk of his children and to the mysterious references to business. Oh, Mattin was undoubtedly a good fellow!

A crowded street. A large grey building displaying an enormous resplendent sign bearing HOTEL DE CALIFORNIE ET DES BASQUES in massive gold lettering. People in a long room in which the glare of electric lights fell upon a table decoorated with cunningly

folded serviettes.

It was not long before Andre Chaadin was at the bed side of her niece, affectionately dandling the new baby, while she related volubly the little incidents of the life of her village. "How far off it all seems, Matanta! " the niece remarked, barely listening to her aunt, and then changed the conversation to a narration of the brilliant start which she and her husband had made as hotel keepers.

Don Joaquin, as he read the newspapers in the tiny lounge of the hotel, nevertheless felt homesick and vaguely ill at ease. In this stuffy hotel it did not seem to him that he was in his nephew's home. He watched a trifle pensively his nephew's preoccupation with his client's requirements. The sound of a child's footsteps outside interrupted his thoughts and a dear little mite appeared along the corridor.

"Dominica, nor naiz ni?"(Who am I?)

The delighted uncle held out his arms to the child but his most dulcet tones made no impression on her. The little girl looked at him with astonished, wide-open eyes and Mattin's voice was heard in the distance saying in execrable French that the child had forgotten Basque.

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A week went by and Don Joaquin and his sister were still at Bordeaux. Andre Chaadin had no complaint to make on this account but the 'American' had grown as sad as he was when he had got back from San Sebastien. He was homesick for his sister's quiet little house and may even have missed Halzadiko-borda.

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The difficulty was to find an excuse for leaving. His hephew and niece would be genuinely sorry to see him go, particularly Mattin, who retained his old, affectionate deferential ways.

All the same, Uncle Joaquin, who was an acute observer, felt that Mattin had changed a little. Who would have suspected in a simple farmlabourer the organising capacity and tactful courtesy of a successful hotel-keeper? What a worker hewas, too!

On the Sunday, as Don Joaquin was starting out to Mass, he met his nephew on the stairs. "Are you coming with me, Mattin," he enquired.

"Impossible, Uncle. There's no time off in my trade. Sunday is a working day just like the rest of the week. I've got far too much to do. I must see to the marketing, settle prices, superintend everything. And since little Jacqueline arrived - her mother thought that she should have a less countrified name than her sister's - we've increased our responsibilities."

Andre Chaadin kept on repeating that Mattin was a good father and that his wife was charming and surely Jean Pierre ought to have been able to find someone better than a cobbler's daughter. One day Don Joaquin was listening to his sister's lamentations as he puffed a cloud of blue smoke from his puro when the door opened and Dominica peeped in with a mischievous smile, holding out a letter for her uncle.

It was a letter from the Abbé Barnatéguy. A smuggling incident had created a stir in the district, he wrote. Abiena's son had been caught red-handed with some barrels of brandy but his companion (whose name he had refused to disclose) had got away. "I have heard

heard that your nephew Jean Pierre is under grave suspicion. He is a very daring young man. You ought to advise him to be more careful, especially as ... "

Without staying to read any further Uncle Joaquin rose. "Get the luggage ready, Chaadin, we must leave this evening," he ordered.

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Don Joaquin's arrival in the darkness at Halzadiko-borda was announced by the furious barking of Captain and Bichou. Chanetta stood anxiously at the door, trying to discern by the light of a flickering candle who the belated visitor might be.

"You, Joaquin? What has happened?"

Noticing his sister's evident anxiety Don Joaquin realised how strange a visit at ten o'clock at night on the very evening he arrived home must seem, and he tried to find some pretext for it. "Oh!," he explained, "it was such a fine night that I thought I'd take a walk and come and have a talk with Jean Pierre."

Chanetta shook her head. "Jean Pierre has gone to court Anicha," she rejoined. "Besides," she added with embarrassment, "he gets home very late nowadays. Sometimes he doesn't get back till morning."

Her brother passed his hand over his forehead. "Tell him, Chanetta," he said, "that I must see him early to-morrow morning."

The moon rose in the heavens, piercing the clouds with its luminous silvery beams and throwing the black mountains into sharp relief. Don Joaquin wended his way home in great anxiety, seeming to see a customs officer lurking in the shadow of every hedge.

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"Cre-e-e-e-do in unum Deum."

The Abbé Barnatéguy's solemn tones had not stopped when the full-throated men's voices and the high notes of the boys took up the response "Patrem omnipotentem" at a pitch so high that they were forced to descend a note or two, then finding themselves too low down in the scale, to raise their pitch again.

Neither the uncertainty of the harmony nor the pious gaiety of the sunlit church, heavy with incense, served to relieve Don Joaquin of his fit of depression. He sat there, in a corner of the gallery, with his head in his hands, mingling his sighs with his prayers and frequently consulting his watch.

Seven minutes past ten. Ten past ten. A quarter past ten and Jean Pierre had not arrived. Terrible visions passed before his uncle's anxious eyes. He saw the customs men taking aim with their rifles, an escape in the darkness, carabineros at the frontier, and he suddenly realised how very dear to him was his rough, taciturn nephew, Jean Pierre.

A floorboard in the gallery creaked under a footstep as Jean Pierre approached. Without a trace of excitement in his manner he hung up his beret and, stepping over a bench, knelt on his handkerchief by Don Joaquin's side.

"When did you get back?" whispered his uncle, who tried not to reveal his anxiety to this calm peasant.

"Not till a few minutes ago. I only left myself time to change my clothes. But we must not neglect God and our religious duties even if we are a bit tired." And smiling, he joined in with

the others: "Et resurrexit tertia die."

Don Joaquin, too, recited the Creed. His 'Mexican' voice swelled the fervent chanting of the choir which rose to the rafters of the church to greet the fat-faced cherubs holding aloft their azure scrolls. But something still prevented him from following the service. He could still see a big red-faced man saying to him: "Go to Mass with you, Uncle? Impossible."

The Mass was over and the boys scrambled noisily down the staircase from the Church gallery. Under the scowling gaze of a customs man sitting in the inn across the road, Don Joaquin drew his nephew on one side, to give him some good advice.

Jean Pierre listened with a smile, like a man sure of himself, but by degrees his attention wandered. Following his glance Don Joaquin noticed a dark young woman waiting under the plane trees. "Valgame Dios! I'm keeping you from your sweetheart," he apologised. "Just one word, though. How much money have you lost.?"

"Fifteen thousand francs."

"Well! let me give it to you as a wedding present!"

IV.

The pretty ceremony at the Church, the merry Ameketako*, the wedding banquet, the fandangos danced to the intoxicating strains of the accordions - Don Joaquin had these pleasant recollections in his mind as he discussed with the Abbé Barnatéguy Anita's marriage with Jean Pierre which had taken place on the previous day.

* A preliminary wedding feast at 11 o'clock.

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"And now little Anicha is proud and happy at Halzadiko-borda" he exclaimed. "I am delighted with the marriage, which will assure Jean Pierre's happiness."

"Yes," agreed the Abbé, "Anicha is really a very charming and nice young woman."

For a moment there was silence. Then Don Joaquin stirred himself in his armchair, crossed his legs, and lit a cigar. "My dear Barnatéguy," he remarked, "I have now been home a year. The time has come for me to make up my mind to which of my three nephews I shall leave my fortune. Which do you advise?"

In great perplexity the good priest played with his snuff-box. Finally he said that it was very difficult for him to give any advice on such a delicate question.

"At any rate," continued Don Joaquin, "you don't recommend me to leave my money to Inacio?"

"No, I don't," agreed the abbé sadly. "It is bad enough that he should have had your hundred thousand francs. The gift has utterly changed him."

"Oh. no! That hasn't changed him," expostulated Don Joaquin. "Do you suppose that it's my money that has made him careless and extravagant and given him his taste for pleasure. No! these unhappy instints were his already but they did not reveal themselves until Inancio had an opportunity of doing no work. Ah! Barnatéguy, what a terrible power money enjoys, with its ability to reveal our hidden natures. It requires the strongest disposition to resist this power."

"Still, you've had the satisfaction of discovering two strong-minded fellows, Jean Pierre and Mattin, Gazoa!,"remarked the Abbe.

"I was waiting for that." rejoinedDon Joaquin. "In order not to upset anyone you would like me to divide my fortune into two equal parts, wouldn't you? Well! I don't mean to do so. It's going to one man only, and that man won't be Mattin! ". Reechoed.

The Abbé jumped up in surprise. "Not Mattin?" "But he seems to me to be a real good sort, a hard worker, of settled habits and with the highest sense of honour."

"Valgame Dios!" swore Don Joaquin. "Mattin's a good fellow right enough and I realise that his reasons for going to Bordeaux were very different from those which took Inacio to San Sebastien. Nevertheless he has been misled by his affection for his children. Dominica and Jacqueline - the Abbé sighed as he heard the last name - would have been far happier leading an independent life in the country that in the sad, foggy city to which he has transplanted them. Mattin has misunderstood his true duty, which was to continue the line of etcheco-jaun (master-farmers) of Halzadiko-borda and to bring up his children with respect for those traditions which are the beauty of our unchanging race.

"Jean Pierre,on the other hand,is a simple and primitive man. He has not even thought of making any change in his manner of life. He still tills his land with his own hands as his fathers did before him. The money which I gave him has in no wise changed him: he is neither proudernor more ambitious than he used to be.

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Perhaps he is a little more daring in his smuggling expeditions and in his bets, but in this he shows himself a good Euskarien (Basque) and neither of us can reproach him for such faults, Barnatéguy, seeing that we both of us share them with him!

"Yes," the old man went on, " that shy, rough, wild, taciturn Jean Pierre is far more deserving of my fortune than Mattin. Mattin, with his moustache, is getting greedy and obsequious. His children don't know Basque and can't speak French properly. And, Barnatéguy, listen to this! Mattin no longer goes to Mass!

The Abbé was too overcome with grief to reply. Don Joaquin's voice grew husky as he continued. "I have no children of my own. Think how dearly I shall love Jean Pierre's, who, like myself, will belong to Halzadiko-borda."

While the Abbé, still overcome with emotion, dipped his trembling fingers into his snuffbox, Don Joaquin drew a chair to his desk and, taking a sheet of paper, wrote with a firm hand:

" I give and bequeath to my nephew Jean Pierre Alzate of Halzadiko-borda all my goods and possessions comprising my estate at Tamaulipas in the State of Mexico of the same name, my ranch at Sauceda with all the cattle and stock, and all my shares of which he will find a list in my safe at the Société Générale.

" I recommend him to make good use of this fortune which I amassed by hard work, and above all, to bring up his children in his own image, as true Basques.

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2.. The Trip To Paris .

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THE TRIP TO PARIS.

"Except for our souls", Miguel of Bisarbiena was wont to remark, "the animals fare better than we do. Just think of it, the cattle now go to market in a motor lorry, while I have never been in a train all my life!"

"You know quite well that that's entirely your own fault", rejoined his wife tartly. "I could never get you to go with me to Bayonne or to Lourdes."

"But, Frantcha, how can we both be away from home together?"

"A fine lot you stay at home when I'm away. The reason you won't accompany me is that you like to go off to the tavern to waste your time at muss. You even prefer a game of cards to a trip to Paris."

At this point of the discussion, which never varied, Miguel suddenly remembered some urgent task and prudently disappeared. Only when he was some way from the house did he allow his temper to get the better of him. How dared Frantcha reproach him for being devoted to that one distraction of his life, a game of cards? What! Couldn't a poor labourer who slaved all day forget his week's toil when Sunday came round ? Couldn't he amuse himself with a pack of cards which would give him a chance of showing his skill and ingenuity? Must he, to please his wife, leave off going to the tavern and hear no more the joyous bursts of laughter and the hearty songs that greeted him there? Really, soliloquised Miguel, that shrewish Frantcha was blessed with too good

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good a husband! She deserved an idle, good-for-nothing fellow who didn't arrive home until the hour when he, Miguel, was setting out for his day's work.

What really vexed Miguel most in his wife's recriminations was her frequent taunt that he liked his game of cards better than a visit to Paris. Better than anyone else Frantcha knew that the deepest regret of her husband's life was that he had had to refuse to go with his brother Pancho when the latter had wished for his company to the Metropolis on returning from America.

Miguel had never forgotten that year. He could still hear the steady drip, drip of the rain which, day after day, had prevented any work out of doors. Seeing that there was nothing for his brother to do, Pancho, with great insistence, had persuaded Miguel to spend a week with him in Paris. But on the morning they had arranged to start, the Sun had, most mischievously, deigned to smile on them. With maize to be sown and the vine to tend Miguel had felt that he must remain behind on the farm.

On the following day, of course, the sun withdrew once more behind the clouds. Throughout the Basque countryside it rained continuously while Pancho was away and, since then, that missed opportunity had been the burden of Miguel's lamentations.

His wife's taunting revived his sorrow and wounded him to the quick. To silence her, he would always remark on these occasions, "How I wish Pancho would come back, so that we might go to Paris together!" He expressed this wish so often that in the end he persuaded himself, but not Frantcha, of its truth!

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Imagine his immense joy and sense of triumph when one fine day ancho turned up at Bisarbienea and that very evening, repeated his nvitation! "On this occasion, Miguel," he added, "you must really ome to Paris with me. This time you must not let your plans be uined by the sun's caprice".

Frantcha speedily reproved her imprudent brother-in-law for peaking so lightly of 'God's eye', as many of the peasants term he sun. Judge of her stupefaction when she heard Miguel himself rranging to start in the following week! With anxious devotion she attended to her husband's needs and made him three new shirts, as if he were about to cross the seas to America.

Sunday came and the two brothers climbed aboard the coach to take the train at Bayonne. As the old vehicle lumbered along Miguel, in his delight at setting out for such unknown splendour, had no eyes for the modest villages or the smiling faces of the mountains in the roseate morning light.

The hours passed sadly for Frantcha, without her dear Miguel to henpeck. Evening came and she was frightened to see Pancho, alone, enter the kitchen of Bisarbienea.

"Don't be alarmed!" he called out cheerfully. "I'll tell you what has happened. At Bayonne I met the friend whom I was going to Paris to see and, <u>ma foi</u>, there was no reason for me to go on. But as it would have been silly to stop Miguel this time, I handed him over to Mattin of Hasparren. Matten was going to Paris and agreed to show him his way about there."

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Presumably, even without Pancho, Miguel enjoyed his visit to Paris, for days went by without any sign of him. At the end of a fortnight when Frantcha was thoroughly upset and fearing the worst, Miguel suddenly appeared. At once he enquired about the crops, grumbled over the work done during his absence, and asked so many questions that there was no time to answer them. Later, when Frantcha tried to glean some details of his trip to Paris, Miguel was less talkative.

"It's not a patch on our village", was his uniform reply to the questions showered upon him by his wife, the children, M. le Curé, the shoemaker, foresters, peasant farmers and metayers. As may be supposed, the whole village was very pleased with this observation. A new pride and joy came to those who had questioned Miguel, when they went back to their young corn or their fields of rich brown earth, newly turned by the plough, or worked in their little gardens, bright with wisteria and roses, or trod the meadows whose tall grass bent to the caress of the south wind. To think that the great Paris itself could not compare with this strip of Basque countryside!

Pancho, on the other hand, could not understand his brother's reticence and was puzzled by Miguel's silent mirth whenever his adventure was mentioned. One day, seeing him working alone in the garden, Pancho went up to him with a determination to put him through a stiff cross-examination.

"What was it that you liked in Paris. Miguel?"

"Oh, everything!"

"Was your hotel comfortable?"

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"Excellent. I met there several Basques. One of the Etcheverrys from Espelette, two 'Americans' from . . . "

"What was the name of the hotel?" interrupted Pancho.

"I don't remember".

"What street was it in?"

"Ma foi, I don't remember that either! Mattin took me there."

"Did Mattin spend much time with you?"

"Oh, no! He had his own business to attend to".

"So you were alone, then?"

"No, oh no! there were some others - a very good fellow called Duhalde, and Etcheverry, who told me . . . "

"Did you often go out together?"

"Occasionally, yes. One of the 'Americans' said that he knew you, Pancho.

"Gizona (man)! You can tell me another time about the 'Americans'. I want to know how you spent your time."

Miguel could stand it no more and dropped his spade. "Listen, Pancho, I'll tell you the whole truth", he replied rather reluctantly. "Near the hotel there is a nice little café. I did not get any further than that. We spent our days there playing muss!" And while Pancho remained speechless with surprise, Miguel leant towards him and, with a wink of his eye, observed drily -

"It was a good trip. I won four thousand francs."

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THE RETURN .

' Ah! how easily things go wrong!
A word misplaced or a sigh too long.
Then comes a mist or a blinding rain
And the world is never the same again.'

Time did nothing to deaden the remorse felt by Chemartin of Mariantonen-borda whenever he thought of his quarrel with Yoset of Berreluzea.

When, with head erect and crossed arms, he came down from the Church Gallery to the Altar" to seek God's Holy Presence" there, the memory of that ugly dispute chafed and smarted like a burn. On market days, too, when over a game of cards the talk turned on friends who had gone to America, Chemartin, usually so gay and talkative, became silent whenever Yoset was named. For Yoset, to Chemartin's abiding sorrow, had left the district a few days after the fight,before Chemartin, all bruised and discoloured from the thrashing he had received, had dared to appear out of doors.

3. The Return .

Yoset had fought hard and so had Chemartin. Yet the latter had to admit that, though he had lost because he was the weaker, he had deserved what he got. What demon had led him to slander Yoset? What had possessed him at that pelota match when Yoset had missed the ball once or twice, to accuse him of having sold himself to the other side?

A faint blush still mounted to the wrinkled yellow cheeks of Chemartin whenever he recalledthe row that followed..

Yoset, white with anger, had refused to go on playing, where-

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the onlookers hooted and jeered and were soon taking sides. Backers and players exchanged the foulest insults. The ground was soon deserted, the insults continuing as they crossed the open space to a corner of the meadow beyond.

"Are you a man?" Yoset had asked, as he strode up to Chemartin with clenched fists.

"You were bought, you lost intentionally," Chemartin had repeated.

A blow from Yoset had prevented him from continuing. Brought home, half-conscious, to Mariantonen-borda, it was only in the quiet of his room that, under his mother's sorrowing gaze, he had confessed to her the falseness of the accusation.

He knew too well how false it was. Was there in the whole village a more honest and conscientious lad than Yoset? Did not he, Chemartin, look upon him as his best friend? How many games of pelota they had played together? How many profitable smuggling expeditions had they not made together across the frontier? What joyous songs they had sung in chorus on fête-nights. Here they were, the closest of friends, and Chemartin had stupidly, nay shamefully, destroyed their happy associations!

He would have liked to know what they thought of him down in the village. No doubt that he was drunk or from sudden avarice had regretted the bet of 3 _duros_ that he had on Yoset, which the latter had seemed about to lose for him.

He could never admit that the one and only explanation was a sudden access of hate that had come to him when he saw Yoset kissing Dominica, just before the game began. She was the girl who looked

after the Pelota Court, Dominica, whom Chemartin had admired for so long and who had given him nothing but meaningless words or scornful looks. . .

Still, after a whole week's reflection and turning over and over again the cause and consequences of the quarrel, Chemartin had been thoroughly ashamed of himself and realisedthat he could find no possible pretext for not going to Yoset and offering his apologies.

Perhaps if Yoset had remained in the village Chemartin could have relied upon the lapse of time to efface the unhappy memory of the dispute but, as he knew, Yoset was shortly leaving for America.

A speedy reconciliation was therefore necessary. Although it was hard on Chemartin to have to eat humble pie, this would be better than the regrets which held him prisoner. So one hight, when the approaching darkness hid his steps, he reached Berro-luzea. But neither in the stables, to which he crept through a back gate, nor in the clover fields, where a farm hand was finishing day's work, could Chemartin find Yoset.

Next day, Sunday, at Mass, the anxious Chemartin sought in vain his adversary amonst the worshippers kneeling on their folded hand-kerchiefs in the Gallery. As he left the Church a friend told him, rather slyly, that Yoset had advanced his departure and had gone to one of his sisters at Bordeaux three days earlier.

This news came as a shock to Chemartin. Although he gave no sign of his grief, he waa nonetheless upset. Poor Yoset would take into exile the memory of a totally unmerited insult. He

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would remain abroad for a long time, perhaps for ever, and when he thought of Chemartin it would be with anger and revenge in his heart. The quarrel would be a perpetual stain on Chemartin's character. When everybody else had forgotten the quarrel, he would still brood over it with a remorse that nothing could remove.

One day, however, - a market day just like old times - a cattle dealer from Espelette, while trying to sell a cow to Chemartin, mentioned that the 'American' from Berroluzea was returning.

Yoset coming home! Yoset! So violently excited was Chemartin on hearing this news that for the moment his head swam. He quickly recovered, however, to engage in keen bargaining for the cow but he was so overcome with joy that his wife had to wait up long into the night for his return to the farm.. She was astonished to see him so cheerful. He greeted her with a smile and was soon whistling like a young man.

At the inn, where he had remained late, some of the old cronies had teased him about Yoset's return but Chemartin had only laughed at their remarks.

The thought that he would now be able to make amends gave him unbounded joy. It would be a handsome reparation, too, Chemartin promised himself, for Yoset would certainly come back to the place as poor as he had left it. Chemartin would help him, would find him a job. Already the thought of the meeting made him happy and, in anticipation, he enjoyed the pleasure he would derive from going up to Yoset with outstretched hand for a prolonged bortxeco (embrace) and offering him those apologies which were his due.

September came, and under the golden rays of the autumnal

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sun the mountains grew into immense blue ramparts behind the purple foot-hills. One Sunday, as Chemartin was leaving the Church gallery, he heard the miller whisper that the 'American' of Berroluzea was amongst them. 'The American of Berroluzea!' Which was his friend Yoset? Would he recognise him?

No, the slender Yoset of former times was not there. But under the tinting plane trees, standing against a gleaming limousine, surrounded by villagers, a man in a dark suit relieved by a heavy gold watch-chain.

"That's Yoset" said the miller, who had followed Chemartin out of the church. It appeared that after a long struggle Yoset had had an unexpected stroke of luck and had made millions.

Millions. Yoset was a millionaire.

Chemartin watched him from afar. This well-dressed, quiet, smiling, self-possessed man was Yoset of the Belota Court, - Yoset, the memory of whom had obsessed Chemartin for so long. Was this the Yoset with whom he had for so long looked forward to make it up?

Surely this rich American would no longer feel any ill will for a poor working farmer like Chemartin? He shook hands with him as with the other villagers who welcomed him back.

Chemartin knew quite well the men who had gathered round Yoset. They included mutual friends but there were others who had formerly taken no interest in Yoset and would not now have been there if he had come back without means.

Supposing, behaving like such people, Chemartin had

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had gone up to the 'American' and had said: "Yoset, I have always been sorry that I insulted you, let us forget the sad past", who would have believed that his apology was solely due to remorse? Everyone, including Yoset himself, would have thought Chemartin a contemptible toady who shamelessly abased himself in order to be the friend of a rich man. No, Chemartin could apologise only to a Yoset as poor as in days gone by. He could not ask forgiveness of this prosperous, influential personage.

As the villagers dispersed, Chemartin noticed that Yoset was watching him. The smile on the latter's face made Chemartin feel that the spectators, too, had remembered the quarrel and the fight and that they were watching, with ill-natured amusement, to see what would happen.

"Well, Chemartin." said one of them approaching him, "It seems that our Yoset has made a big fortune"

"Surely that doen't surprise you," replied Chemartin with a shrug of the shoulders. Then, impelled by an irresistible pride and regardless of the fact that, instead of the apology he had been preparing for more than twenty-five years, he was repeating and adding to his original insult, Chemartin spat out, as he strode contemptuously past Yoset -

"No doubt, he made his money abroad in the same way as he would have lost his game here, had I not intervened at a certain pelota match."

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THE POOR RELATION .

4. The Poor Relation .

"WHO would think that the poor fellow has rich relations? Isn't it a shame that they don't look after him?"

Everybody made some such remark on seeing the old labourer Ganichon bent under the weight of an enormous sack, or wearily driving his spade into the earth, or sharpening his scythe. And everytime he heard it Mendizabal, his wealthy cousin of Espelette, grew more exasperated.

As a matter of fact this miserable old man was a disgrace to him, although, seeing that for years he had begged Ganichon to let him help him, the blame could hardly be laid at his door.

"My friend," Mendizabal had often said to him, "your place is under my roof. Come and live with us. I find it very hard to see you toiling thus." But Ganichon was a stubborn fellow and never failed to reply that so long as he was able to earn his daily bread, he would never depend on others.

As a result of Ganichon's refusals, Mendizabal lost all sympathy for him, sullen rage filling his heart every time he saw his cousin working on the road.

You should have seen the speed of the Mendizabal's car as it whizzed past Ganichon! A hand raised quickly in salute: that was all. The cousin whose poverty-stricken looks so worried them, was quickly hidden in a cloud of dust.

As for Ganichon, he just stood still in the middle of the

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road, with a rake or a fork over his shoulder and a <u>chahato</u> (goatskin) slung over his old shirt, which sulphate of copper had stained blue and was spotted purple in places from new wine. As the car disappeared in the distance, he laughed bitterly until his prominent chin and wrinkled cheeks shook with malice at the thought of the humiliation which their common relationship brought upon the proud Mendizabals.

Pride! That was the over-ruling vice of the entire Mendizabal family, rich and poor alike.

It was from pride, and that alone, that generous help had been offered to Ganichon: and, for the same reason, the offer had been spurned.

Without doubt the struggle would have gone on much longer, with the same results, had not the unfortunate Ganichon fallen and broken his leg one night when he went out in the dark to drive off the badgers with a tin can from the maze fields at Baratzaldea.

Directly he heard of it Mendizabal hastened to the hospital where the injured man had been taken, and two days later removed his cousin to his home.

Ganichon, who was weak and in great pain, was furious that he could no longer work but saw that he must submit to the change without being too ungracious about it. In the end his heart was softened by the very sincere kindness with which his relations treated him. Indeed, as his leg mended, he began to enjoy his unaccustomed life of ease. He delighted in certain little amenities, such as coffee after his meals - a

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treat which formerly he had allowed himself only on fêtedays. He liked, too, to take a nap on a soft bed instead of in the shade of a haystack on the hard ground, with his beret over his face.

Soon he ate the bread of others without any bitterness, though he never regretted his former independance, the recollection of which still amused him.

Mendizabal, for his part, positively exulted. Whenever he met a friend, he brought the conversation round to Ganichon and told everybody with great good humour: " My cousin is now living with us, you know, We make a great fuss of him and pamper him; he doesn't have to work now!"

If Ganichon could have heard this! But Mendizabal had the sense not to make such remarks at home and, indeed, he went to a lot of trouble to make his touchy cousin as comfortable as possible.

The summer went by peacefully, then autumn. The two cousins went out a good deal but each his own way. Winter brought them together again.

The weather was cold and grey and dull. It grew dark early and the evenings seemed long when the North wind whistled through the leafless branches outside and the rain beat ceaselessly against the window-panes.

One night, seeing Ganichon as unoccupied as himself, Mendizabal, with the idea of giving him pleasure, proposed a game of <u>muss</u>. Thereafter game succeeded game. After supper

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each night, no sooner was the table cleared than the pack of cards and the dry beans for counters were produced and the two excited men sat down to play.

From the outset Mendizabal observed the phenomenal luck of his cousin. Ganichon played with cold and calculating cunning and endless audacity. Mendizabal, on the other hand, quickly grew discouraged and, losing his nerve, inevitably got beaten. With his invariable defeats he soon lost his temper. After a few games he would rise from the table, very dissatisfied with himself, and for the rest of evening sink into a morose and sulky silence, interrupted only by the impatient turning-over of newspapers he had already read.

Ganichon, for his part, would be puffed with pride and suck his pipe with noisy satisfaction.

When the time came for going to bed, the two men would barely speak to each other, though by next morning they had made it up and were ready to resume their game. However, after two months of unending and repeated annoyance, Madame Mendizabal became alarmed. She gently chided her husband to keep his temper more under control and her cousin to be a little less provoking. If only he would agree to lose now and again, just once in a way! she suggested.

The two stubborn men disregarded her wise advice. Both quarrels and play went on until one day Mendizabal, in a fit of rage, banged his fist on the table, threw away his cards, and strode away, swearing abominably,

Ganichon didn't move but Mme. Mendizabal, as she picked

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up the cards, decreed that the two men should not play together again.

They never played again but the evenings were no happier. Ganichon thought it astonishing that Mendizabal should regard himself as entitled to win more often than his opponent, while Mendizabal considered that Ganichon should have shown himself more obliging to his Amphitryon. Forgetting charity or gratitude, the two men cordially detested each other by now.

July came, and Mendizabal got ready for his annual cure at Vichy. "I'm leaving to-morrow," he said to Ganichon one day.

"So am I," replied Ganichon, to his amazement.

"You must be out of your mind," cried the indignant Mendizabal. "Why do you want to leave us?"

"I am now well enough not to wish to be an expense to you any longer."

Neither entreaties nor threats could move Ganichon. Next day, when Mendizabal, frantic with rage, was getting into the train, his cousin was rescuing from the corner of the barn his old scythe, the hone, the two spades and the tattered sack he put over his head when it rained. Then he left the house.

Mendizabal's cure was utterly ruined by the thought of his relation's departure. He grieved deeply that he had been so unwilling to submit to be beaten every time they played muss together. "He would have stayed if it hadn't been for those wretched cards," he reflected bitterly. Above all, it upset him to think that, once again, he would meet Ganichon

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as he drove about the country, looking as shabby as he used to do. Would his neighbours begin again to think of him as a Croesus who neglected his poor relations, and waste their pity upon 'poor' Ganichon, compelled to revert to earning his living, notwithstanding his bad leg?

When Mendizabal got back from Vichy and drove along the Basque roads, he seemed to recognise in every labourer or cattle driver he met his cousin Ganichon, staring at him in a living reproach . But it was not until some fifteen days later that he actually came across him, sitting under the shade of a dusty hedge, while the heat shimmered from the sun-baked road.

With a deep sigh Mendizabal stopped his car. Ganichon came limping towards him. They shook hands.

"Well, how goes it?" asked Mendizabal cheerfully.

"Oh, I'm all right, even if my appearance doesn't suggest it," replied the other no less cheerfully.

"What! don't you regret leaving my house?"

"Not very much, for I can now play muss every evening."

Mendizabal kept calm in spite of this provocative reply as he asked his cousin how he liked working in such hot weather.

"I don't work any more now," remarked Ganichon complacently.

"You don't work! Then how do you get your living?" stammered Mendizabal incredulously.

Ganichon looked at him for a moment in silence. Then, anticipating with keen enjoyment the humiliation which Mendizabal would go through in attempting to induce him to return to his home, when he heard the reply to his question, he remarked

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GUANES' JUDGMENT.

If ever in the length and breadth of the Labourd there was a wise and discerning peasant, that man was most clearly Guanès of Mendihaldea. If he were asked about the cultivation of a vine, the customary formalities when a metayer* left, how to divide a herd or an estate, or merely whether the time had come to sow a particular crop, it was all the same: the reply invariably bore witness to the profound wisdom and prudence that comes with a long and busy life.

If farmcraft and the mysteries of old customs had no secrets for him, that keen observer of mankind, Guanès, was even more profound in his knowledge of humanity. None could discern their faults so well, nor appreciate better a man's qualities or analyse his character. He might occasionally be slow to make up his mind but at other times the most trifling incident would enable him to form an unerring opinion. So, throughout the country, when a man was needed, all, from M. le Curé to the humblest <u>bordaris</u> (metayer), came to Guanès, whether for a new sacristan, a farm servant or someone to trim a vine.

As may be supposed, there were no such metayers elsewhere as were to be found on the property of which Guanès was <u>régisseur</u>. To be fair, it must be admitted that now and again some treasure of a man whom he had selected turned out to be lazy or given to strong drink, whereupon the owner grew annoyed. But everyone knew - and Guanès made no secret of it - that even the nicest

* a tenant farmer who pays his rent in produce and services.

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natures were spoilt by too many good things and too much kindness at the hands of a soft-hearted master.

When some unhappy wight had to be discharged because he had exhausted the patience of the owner or of his <u>regisseur</u>, it was to Guanès that the task fell of finding a man in his place who would please both owner and agent, and Guànes was the more difficult to please. This, the proprietor noticed only too well when it came to finding a tenant for Ameztegia.

Between the spreading branches of two immense oaks, this charming farmhouse stood on the crest of a vine-clad slope, catching the piny-mauve glow of the setting sun. The number of aspirants for the holding naturally gave Guanès very full scope for his choice. From Sare, from Aïnhoa, Souraïde, Itxassou came applicants of very type, from strong young fellows to old men whose weather-beaten faces told of a life of outdoor toil. Some were unknown to Guanès, others brought him strong recommendations, but none had the good fortune to please him.

"What's the matter with So-and-so?", asked the owner a trifle irritably.

"He's a drunkard. Last year, on St. Martin'S eve, he fell into a ditch."

"And so-and-so?"

"He gambles, stakes even his cattle at cards."

A third applicant neglected his farm to go smuggling, another spent too much time at pelota. One unfortunate fellow talked too much to be a good worker, others were too keen on sport or specu-

lated. In the end, the owner began to mutter to himself - not so loud that Guanès could hear, be it noted- that the perfect tenant could never be found. One night, however, the faithful regisseur came to him almost exhausted but with the good news that at last he had been lucky and that this time he had really discovered the right man for the holding. "It's José de Munozurria," he announced. "He's a very solid, industrious, family man, who is entirely trustworthy. Ah, Nausia (Master)! If he should come to Ameztegia the property will be well looked after." In terms which were almost enthusiastic Guanès described the neat appearance of José's stable, with its clean floor and roof hung with cobwebs - as everyone knows, the webs protect the cattle from disease. He praised, too, the well-fertilised land and clean trenches between his vines, through which neither nettles nor other weeds were allowed to show their heads. He ended the panegyric ~~optimistically~~ with the promise that José would be coming to see him during the following week.

Until the time came for the visit Guanès could talk of nothing but José, whenever he saw his master, and congratulated himself on having found such a treasure. On the Monday morning, as the ground glittered with frost and the rays of the early morning sun turned the leafless vinestalks pink, Guanès and José were to be seen climbing the road to Ameztegia. An hour later, their inspection finished, they were ~~seen~~ entering the owner's office.

It was soon clear that Guanès had in no way exaggerated. José was a man of the most straightforward and intelligent looks and, though reserved in speech, his few remarks created an excellent

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impression.His manners were easier than those of an ordinary peasant and on entering the office he had removed his beret. Guanès had observed with some slight annoyance this unusual politeness from his protégé and had told him, though not impolitely, to put on his beret. Out of deference to the owner, however, José had continued his conversation without attempting to cover his old head, bald though it was except for a few straggling white hairs.

Ameztegia pleased him enormbusly and he was ready to take immediate possession of it so, after a little more conversation, the two men withdrew from the office.

Towards evening Guanès saw his master again. "Well!", said the latter,"you were right. I like your man very well. Shall we now fix matters up with him?"

Guanès spat on his hands, drove his spade two or three times into the earth, scratched his forehead, and then shook his head.

"I don't know," he remarked. "I've been thinking things over. It seems to me that we ought to break it all off."

The master expressed astonishment.

"Look, Nausia!", explained Guanes, "it's like this! The fellow isn't what I had supposed. I am afraid that he's false and deceitful, obsequious and crochety; in fact, I'm not sure that he isn't a bit feeble-minded. I was watching him carefully this morning all the while he was talking to you."

"This morning, Guanès, this morning?" How did he manage to displease you then?"

Guanes looked at this master with some surprise and then

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answered him in a tone of pitying contempt.."Didn't you notice, Nausia, that all the while he was talking the silly fellow kept his beret in his hand?"

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6. Pampi's Career .

PAMPI's CAREER .

Fate played ann odd prank when she decreed that Pampi of Ilatzeco-Borda and Panchika of Marzilainea should meet daily, either by the fountain or the mill-stream or else on the high road. Folks smiled in mild astonishment to see the two together. He was tall and broad shouldered and carried himself so proudly, looking out on to the world with wide-open eyes and firm-set features. She, on the other hand, was tiny and very slender, with a pair of mocking eyes set in a thin, blotchy face. Her faded pink apron failed to h hide the shabbiness of her old dress. What possible charm could Pampi, the bravest and richest smuggler in the whole district, find in an unattractive person like Panchika? Her uncouth gestures, masculine ways, bursts of strident laughter and coarse vocabulary were felt to be a disgrace to her village. "They must be talking of their smuggling trips," mothers explained to their daughters when the latter showed signs of jealousy at the ill-assorted friendship.

This was indeed the truth, for the proud young man and the unattractive young woman followed the same trade: that is, if any comparison can be drawn between the lucrative expeditions to which Pampi devoted himself and the modest profits made by Panchika as a result of her trips to the Venta (stores) just across the Spanish frontier.

All the Veronicas, Gachuchas and Chanettas, and the hundred

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Mayis who in their secret hearts had chosen Pampi for themselves were indignant that Panchika should be their rival. All the same, she had succeeded in attracting Pampi's attention by the simple device of being the only woman to treat him with indifference. Her lack of coquetry had appealed to one who made light of so many conquests.

Pampi knew quite well that as he left the pelota ground or came out of church after Vespers it was his tall figure in the crowd that aroused the interest of the young women and that their tender smiles were all meant for him. As he passed the windows of Magnana's workroom, was not the tinkling laughter of her young dressmakers for his ears? Why should this affect him, he asked himself? He had grown so accustomed to popularity that his calm features now showed no sign when the girls displayed their admiration for him, or Ganichon, the cobbler, hailed him with a loud "Hep" from his bench, or even M. le Curé crossed the road to pass the time of day with him. The only greeting which made Pampi relax at all was a surly "good-day" from his enemies, the Customs officers. The more they hated him, the greater the pleasure his smuggling gave him. To expose himself to danger, to be hunted by them, to trick and play with his natural foes was a never-ending source of exhilarating pleasure and amusement. No one knew better than Pampi the thrills and glamour of these nocturnal expeditions and silent ambushes, no one appreciated so well his dangerous but happy and care-free life. But for the joys of smuggling he would have yielded long ago to the impatient

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remonstrances of his parents and taken himself a wife.

A wife, however, would mean sacrifices which seemed to the young man far too great. If he had a home of his own it would be necessary for him to stay there constantly and take his share in the daily toil. Smuggling needed no such constant attention.

Pampi had no desire to be under any restraint. His wife must be a woman able to look after the house but prepared to leave him free to come and go as he liked, without fuss or complaint or seeking an explanation of his absences. Panchuka seemed to be the only woman answering to his requirements.

When he had first met her, her serious unsophisticated manner had pleased him. As he greeted her staggering beneath her pack on the mountain pass, she had gone on her way with a curt "Adio", refusing his proffered aid almost brutally. But afterwards she had become more friendly and turned out to be witty and amusing. Pampi had fallen a victim to her great eyes, which were yellow-green like the autumn bracken.

Her lack of feminine grace and charm had certainly worried him at first but she had other qualities, doubtless less civilised, but of far greater value. Intense industry, humour, courage, endurance, and a devotion to her poor old parents, of which she had already given much proof, were hers and the young man's heart had been touched by these qualities.

Pampi would have married her long ago, had not a thousand reasons intervened, some prudent enough but others unworthy of a true lover. To marry a smuggler, a woman who had a man's

job, seemed unreasonable when one could pick and choose amongst the heiresses of the district. Panchika would bring no money to her husband, the young man occasionally reflected, only to reproach himself for the unworthy thought. Was not a dowry of courage and industry and enterprise worth more than a few thousand francs?

Such thoughts perplexed poor Pampi and troubled his existence. Ordinarily so calm and care-free, he grew morose though his daily meetings with Panchika did not cease. He went up to the fountain whenever he saw her there, bare-footed in the icy water, beating the washing against the smooth stones. When she went into the garden at Marzilainea to get pimentos or potatoes, Pampi would be there, looking at her so kindly that she was surprised that no words of love passed his lips.

She was proud, while he could not make up his mind. But for the happenings of a certain October day the pair would have gone on like this without avowing their mutual affection. What a dark, gloomy October day it was, too! The rain fell noisily on the roads, the wind howled, and its savage roar drowned Pampi's shouts as he tried to attract the attention of Panchika, who was struggling along, bent almost double under the torrential rain. When he had overtaken the young woman, the smuggler stopped his cart.

"Heh, Panchika!"

"Hallo, Pampi!"

"I am going to Espelette. Can I give you a lift?"

"Much obliged." With great agility she climbed up

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alongside Pampi. "What have you got there" she asked, pointing to the heavy load at the back of the cart hidden under a black tarpaulin.

"Spirits," answered Pampi curtly. "I'm in a hurry."

They were still some kilometres from the town and in the dreadful weather the distance seemed interminable. The leaves of the trees, pierced by hale and torn to shreds by the gale, were blowing hither and thither through the thick grey curtain of monotonous rain until they fell to earth, their coppery surfaces lighting up the sodden road. A heavy white mist hid the mountains from view, quite blotting out the more distant peaks and merging the nearer slopes into the level foreground. Through the treacherous mist Pampi feared that the Customs officers might at any moment appear, and with nervous hand he whipped his horse to a faster pace.

Anxiety gripped the two young people and at first they found no pleasure in each other's company. Seeing nothing ahead of them they had begun to relax a little when Panchika suddenly uttered an angry exclamation. She whispered a few, quick words into Pampi's ear as two douaniers appeared at the bend of the road and called to him to stop. Pampi, with a muttered oath, had to pull up.

"My poor Pampi, we were waiting for you", said the officers with a feined air of commiseration that could not concealtheir triumph." "Don't make any excuses," they added, as Pampi began to protest. "You must follow us."

Pampi shook with rage and a torrent of abuse rose to his lips but the thought that any outward display of anger would only add to the satisfaction of his captors enab led him to recover himself. "At any rate, no doubt you will let me give you a lift." he growled.

"Certainly, with pleasure," the douaniers replied.

Somewhat hampered by their thick blue rain-sodden cloaks the two men climbed in to the cart while Panchika went to the back of the vehicle to make room for them by the driver, and stowed herself away as well as she could. The cartthen moved to Espelette.

Poor Pampi! How sad he looked between the two blue figures, with his head hanging down between his enormous shoulders and his beret drawn well over his eyes! The d ouaniers, of course, sat proudly erect, though out of respect for Pampi's misfortunes they refrained from talking or turning round to look at Panchika, who was glowering at them from the back of the cart.

When they reached Espelette Pampi stopped the cart. "Here you are, Gentlemen" he said.

"No, no, Pampi! You must go on to the Bureau with us."

"Why?" asked Pampi.

The young man's surprised air exasperated the Customs officers. "Why? The spirits, of course!"

"But I haven't got any," Pampi assured them.

"Rot! What about the barrel?"

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"It's empty!"

The douaniers ran to the barrel with a grin, but Pampi had not deceived them. When Panchika had gone to the back of the cart she had deftly opened the spiggot and let the spirit escape in to the road under coverof the noise of the storm, without the officers' knowing what was happening.

What a fury they now displayed. But to the imprecations which they poured upon him in their white rage Pampi remained impassive for a while; then, turning round his cart, he drove away with a mocking"Adios".

When the two accomplices found themselves alone again, Panchika could no longer conceal her laughter. Pampi said nothing. He thought only of Panchika's presence of mind, which had saved him from prison and ruin. His heart was full of boundless gratitude and his ridiculous hesitation had left him. He flicked his horse with the whip, clicked his tongue to make it start, and without looking up at the girl, said brusquely: "Panchika, will you marry me?"

II.

A long, low house with a great moss-grown roof and irregular walls covered with dazzling whitewash. Some over-grown pear-trees, from which hung a crop of ripening fruit, ~~in the~~ garden. A meadow in which stood a figtree and three cherry trees. Such was the kingdom of Pampi and Panchika.

The young smuggler congratulated himself ~~daily that~~

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daily on his marriage to Panchika and secretly reproached himself for having so long delayed his proposal. Panchika had turned from smuggling to domestic duties and it was marvello to see her digging the garden, cutting wood, milking the cows, turning over the straw, "whistling like a shepherd the while". Pampi could thus give his whole time to smuggling and thanks to her, his expeditions became increasingly profitable. No one could rival her in planning and organising and making all the arrangements. Pampi, before his marriage, had reckoned himself the most artful smuggler alive but he now admitted his wife's superiority and his mates were not ashamed to seek her advice on their projects.

Her invincible good humour made Panchika popular even with the douaniers. Often at rosy dawn, when the frost sparkled on the ground, she would invite one of them in to take a cup of coffee. While they stood round the fireside sipping the scalding drink Pampi would creep into the house by the back door and hide his night's booty in the stable.

Still, it must be admitted that Panchika's character was undergoing a change: she was growing astonishingly greedy of gain. At first, in comparison with the misery that reigned at Marzilainea, the newness of everything in her house had seemed fabulous: for long she had been forced to live on a "talo" (stew) of maize and drag her unstockinged feetfeet along in worn-out sabots, and she marvelled at her new prosperity - furniture that was almost pretty, two new dresses, boundless stores and several big banknotes hidden

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away in a chest. These meagre riches, however, failed to keep her contented for long. She, who formerly had given proof of a joyous indifference in such matters, began to lose her peace of mind and was haunted with the fear of renewing her too intimate acquaintance with poverty. She grew positively avaricious, hoarded her money, and now considered that Pampi was not making enough. Certainly Pampi had no ground for the fear that had once possessed him that, if he married, his wife might reproach him for being a smuggler.

It is more likely that the good man felt that Panchika pressed him a little too hard. It was not that he must not remain out all night, as before his marriage, in cold and storm and rain, to come home, tottering with sleep, with aching shoulders and legs almost numb, at the hour when "the cock stretches his wings to make the sign of the cross before greeting the dawn with a song". No! that he might continue to do! But he was no longer permitted to stroll down to the market, maquila in hand, in his neat black blouse, to gossip with the groups of peasants, to make heavy bets on pelota matches, or linger at the tavern over a glass of wine or a game of cards. Panchika would not tolerate her husband spending his time in idle pleasures when he might be using it to grow richer. She invented a thousand ingenious ways to make money and sold all the eggs and vegetables from the garden and used up all the milk in cheesemaking.

One day, on Pampi's return from a long expedition, she greeted him with the smiling announcement that they were

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going to have a lodger.

Pampi could scarcely believe his ears.

"Yes," continued Panchika, "Lafourgette will be lodging here. He has been on the look out in this district for some time."

Pampi was astonished when he thought of Lafourgette's familiar countenance, that fat rubicund face which not even an immense, bristling, bellicose moustache could make fierce. "You surely don't want a Customs man for a lodger, Panchika", he ventured to suggest.

"Oh! there's no danger from that quarter," she replied. "You'll never get caught by that fellow."

Lafourgette was in fact a very good fellow and hated exertion of any kind, so that no one was afraid of him. Pampi, when he had overcome his astonishment, accepted the arrangement with good grace. His former hostility to the Customs had latterly weakened for he realised vaguely that he owed his present good fortune to them. In what other way could he regard his smart little wife, whose preactical and alert intelligence had soon led her to assume the reins of government with complete assurance? So it was that on the following day Lafourgette took up his abode with the pair.

Panchika was enchanted, and so was Pampi for the first few days. The new lodger was so friendly and amusing and charming. He was always making jokes or telling anecdotes or enlivening the conversation with a witticism. Although at first he fascinated the smuggler and his wife, the

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fascination soon wore off in Pampi's case.

Lafourgette, in truth, was an intolerable bore. When he was not on duty in the evenings he would overwhelm Pampi with interminable yarns. In secret rage the young man would try to find a propitious moment to escape and get on with his work, of the nature of which the douanier had not the least suspicion. But if he moved no further than the kitchen door Lafourgette would get up to follow him, and dogged his footsteps, should he venture in to the garden. Still, the douanier never heard those mysterious whistles which Pampi thought so loud, calling him to some hidden spot in the mountains where his friends impatiently awaited him. When at last Pampi could find a pretext for leaving the house, Lafourgette would go on talking to Panchika.

The two would linger in the kitchen, Lafourgette half-taling to himself while Panchika devoted herself to making up the fire. The old douanier loved to hear his own voice and to coin phrases, repeating them to himself with infinite complaisance. His favourite theme was the tranquil existence he was able to lead and he expatiated to Panchika on the hours of sound sleep he could enjoy, curled up on his dank bed in some sheltered barn, picturing to her the delights of the many idle hours spent with a companion in smoking, reading or playing cards by the roadside.

Lafourgette admitted that the profession had its unpleasant side. One must be out of doors in all sorts of

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weather, for example. But at the end of the month there was good pay to compensate for this and a bonus if one had the luck to catch a smuggler.

These confidences stirred up bitterness in the depths of Panchika's heart. While he was talking, she pictured to herself her dear Pampi, whose life was so much harder and unpleasant. Her man had to be out all night, hunted by the douaniers across gorse-grown gorges, over mountain torrents and rocky r ravines. Many a day did he come home soaked to the skin. Unlike the lucky customs men Pampi had neither heavy boots nor thick cloak to protect him from the weather, only his rough calchoins (leggings) and tiny beret. She remembered that dreadful night when he had remained for three hours in the millpond to avoid capture. On another night, too, he had twisted his ankle and his foot had become terribly swollen. Poor Pampi! He must run risks every night with no certainty o of success without any hope of an occasional bonus.

In the end, when Lafourgette talked about his profession the contempt and hatred with which Panchika had once regarded it had vanished and in its pace there raged a fierce jealousy.

One day the catastrophe which the young wife had so long feared came to pass: Pampi one moonless night stumbled against a tree, fell under the load he was carrying, and broke his arm. "Go and see a doctor," advised the cheerful Lafourgette, feigning ignorance of the cause of the accident. Pampi and Panchika, however, knew better than to trust the pretended learning of doctors: they went at once to a noted

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quack whose skill was famed throughout the district.

The quack employed all his skill in vain: the cure was slow. Panchika grew desperate and tried certain mysterious charms recommended to her by an old wizard in Maloenea. Even these were of no avail. Pampi's arm remained stiff, useless and painful. He could not go to work and the young couple's savings grew less and less every day.

"What a good thing we have Lafourgette's money every week," Panchika sometimes observed. Her good temper surprised Pampi. He was deeply grateful to her for the care she took of him and her anxiety that his arm should be mended as soon as possible. All will come right, he thought, as soon as I can begin smuggling again.

During the long, melancholy afternoons when, with nothing to do, time hung heavily on his hands, he would dream of the happy times that would be his in the near future. He saw himself, with whistle to his lips, waiting ~~beneath~~ with his horses under the stunted oaks on the hillside. At last there came a day, after weeks of sad and weary waiting, when Pampi announced to his wife, as they sat by the fire, that his arm was cured and he was ready to get back to work.

"No more smuggling for you, my dear" announced Panchika. You mustn't think of going back to it."

The young man jumped up with a start. "What do you mean, Panchika?"

"I mean that your job is one that brings you more plague than profit and that you must find another!"

Pampi was so overcome that he could find nothing to say. He remained speechless while Panchika tried to rekindle the fire amd for a moment only the sound of the squeaking of the bellows was heard in the kitchen.

"I've been thinking things over," she continued. "There's only one job that will suit you." She hesitated a moment and, summoning her courage, announced firmly: "Pampi, you must become a Customs officer!"

"A Customs Officer!" Pampi bounded from his chair. "You must have lost your senses, Panchika" he cried. He was furious that his wife, a very queen of smugglers, should dare to make so grotesque a proposal to him.

"I am not joking," explained the young woman. "If you were a douanier we should be quite safe with your regular pay of several hundred francs a month. If you aren't willing, nothing but misery awaits us."

Misery! Pampi asked himself sharply if she was not already living under his roof. He looked up at the beams. The last ham had been taken down from the hooks and the shelves were empty in the cupboard where the cheeses were kept. But what distressed him most was the drawn and haggard expression on his wife's face and her hard, bitter look. She, too, had suffered while he was ill and had never complained, he remembered softening. Still, fancy his becoming one of those dreadful douaniers! He couldn't do it, he must protest and show temper.

Panchika never gave him the opprotunity. "Do you think

that youre the only one with regrets?" she asked simply. Gaichua! She was braver than he was and accepted uncompalininingly their revolting destiny.

Pampi remained silent for a moment: then, concealing his breaking heart under a pretence of indifference, he told Panchika with a wry smile that he would do as she wished.

III.

Pampi had been a douanier for two years now and had grown used to his new profession. But he could never agree with his wife when she reminded him that he ought to have changed his job long before. "We lost the best years of our life when we were smugglers" she asserted.

That was Panchika's one regret. She loved her cosy little quarters, the pleasant life of the station and the long gossips with other wives while waiting for their men to return from duty. She looked with fond pride upon her handsome Pampi, so imposing and magnificent in the folds of his great blue cloak.

Pampi had changed a little in these years. His shoulders were more bent and he was heavier and less active. His chiefs had no fault to find with him but his mates complained that he never heard the smugglers whistling to each other and that his legs soon gave out when he had to run after them. Panchika's grievance was that he never got a bonus.

Pampi took no notice of all this. The least little brush

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with a smuggler scared him. He intended, above everything else, to live in peace with all men. Sometimes, when he had an hour off, he would make up his mind to forget all about his work. All in vain. His glance would fall upon his revolver laid on the table, or his plank bed outside, or the blue trousers which Panchika had just finished brushing and had hung up to air on the tree outside.

Alas! Once again their peaceful life was to be disturbed and this time, too, Lafourgette was the cause of the disturbance. By the strangest coincidence he was posted to the same brigade as Pampi.

How delighted the old douanier was to see his friend again. What joy it gave him to continue with Pampi those long chats of former days, enriched of course with accounts of their common experiences which lost nothing in the telling. Pampi, for his part, felt no pleasure; his wife knew nothing of his dislike of Lafourgette. Happy Panchika! She never saw the ghost which Lafourgette had brought with him Pampi saw it only too clearly, however: it was always before his eyes. He felt its gaze upon him, - a calm, mocking, contemptuous gaze that he remembered only too well, the gaze of a Pampi of other days, a cunning smuggler of Ilatzeco-borda who had so often and so cleverly got the better of the douaniers.

To escape from Lafoyrgette Pampi applied for a transfer to the Hautes-Pyrenees. Far removed from his beloved Basque

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country, the memories of his deeply-mourned past might be less in his thoughts.

Before they left the district Panchika wished to pay a long visit to her parents. A week after she had gone, a parcel arrived from her for Pampi. While undoing it the douanier noticed that it gave out a strong perfume greatly resembling that which he remembered as having been a feature of the village stores across the Spanish frontier.
Much intrigued Pampi hastended to get the parcel unwrapped to see its contents. From the wrappings he drew out chocolate, gilt caramels, azucarillos, a bottle of anisette and some Spanish matches. Pampi's first reaction was one of stupefaction: then he burst out laughing.

While away from her husband Panchika was carrying on her old trade as a smuggler.

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7. The Dispute .

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THE DISPUTE .

The August sun beat fiercely down upon the sleepy road: not a cloud was to be seen in the azure sky. Only the chirrup of the grasshoppers rose from the golden fields. Now and again a breath of wind stirred the clumps of maze, to lose itself in the rustle of the bracken on the hillside.

Despite the torrid heat Manuel of Aldapabehera hastened on his way. He was in a hurry to reach the town and the Magistrate's room, there to meet for the first time face to face his worst enemy, Panchua d'Ilatzberia. For nearly three months now the two men had sworn a bitter feud and they no longer knew one another.

Both men, Panchua at Itxassou and Manuel at Souraïde, had led until then the toiling, obscure lives of farmlabourers with no interests save their daily tasks, not even aware of each other's existence until that unhappy day when Manuel tried to take possession of the small property which had been left to him by an aunt at Itxassou.

What a miserable legacy it was, too! A patch of exhausted land, overgrown with weeds and thistles, and - at least Manuel thought so - about fifteen massive oaks with enormous twisted branches. The whole bequest seemed to him so insignificant that he would have been satisfied now and again to cut a little timber, but when he began to lop off a branch Panchua gave orders that he was to be stopped. The land belonged to Manuel without doubt but the trees were his.

Manuel of course disputed Panchua's claim

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and, by way of reprisal, was accused of bad faith. The affair dragged on for days and days before a meeting could be arranged. Each chose as a representative a respected "etcheco-jaun" from his village and the two mediators met on market days or at pelota to discuss their friends' interests. The case was made more difficult by the bad feeling which by now existed between the two principals. Manuel, whose son - a considerable smuggler - had just been denounced to the Customs, accused Panchua of having given him away. Panchua, for his part, asserted that Manuel was in the habit of taking his dogs over to Itxassou when night came, to harry the flocks at Ilatzberia. Matters reached the pitch of invoking the law and starting proceedings, - a supreme insult which no Basque can stomach. Thereupon the etcheco-jaun took offence and declined to make any further efforts to reconcile the parties. To-day the two disputants were on their way to confront each other in the magistrate's presence.

The smallest details of the painful controversy came to Manuel's mind as he approached the town. To give better play to his plans for venegance he forced himself to efface the distressing recollection of his daughter's tears when, the previous week, she had come over from St. Jean-de-Luz, where she had a situation, to confide to her father that she had become engaged to Panchua's son. What! Should Manuel allow himself to be turned from his path by compassion for this ridiculous love-affair? Of course not! On this occasion and for the first time he found himself in agreement with his adversary's decree: Let our children

attend to their own affairs and we will look after ours!."

In vain did the poor girl and her mother plead with him. With equal lack of success, Manuel's friends, even M. le Curé himself, begged him to avoid a scandal. Old "Adalpa-behere" asserted to himself that he wasn't the sort of man to give way. Directly he came to the town, without stopping at the market, where a crowd of black-bloused peasants rubbed shoulders in the midst of lowing cattle, Manuel went straight to the Magistrate's Office.

"M. le juge will be here in a moment," said the attendant. "Will you please wait? There is someone else waiting already."

It could be no one but Panchua. Manuel entered the room holding his head erect. To his eyes blinded with the glare outside the darkness of the room seemed intense. Groping, he found a chair and, as he began to see things more clearly, he glanced around him. Yes, there by the window sat a thin old man with bent back. So this insignificant old creature was the famous Panchua who dared to pretend that he, Manuel, had not a clear conscience! "While blackening mine, will he succeed in whitewashing his own?" thought Manuel contemptuously, as he gave a sly look across the room at the sharp, disagreeable features of his opponent.

Sitting opposite each other, with their maquitas (knife-sticks) propped against their chairs, the two men kept themselves under strict control so that neither should be the first to start a discussion. Thus they remained, motionless, until a noisy buzzing made them raise their heads.

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A wasp, a beautiful brown-and-yellow, velvety wasp was seeking in vain a way out of the room. Manuel tried to kill it with his handkerchief. Panchua opened the shutters. The insect flew into the open with the two adversaries on its trail.

It did not occur to Manuel or Panchua to shut the window. Outside, immediately in front of them,was the pelota court on which play was beginning. A good number of spectators had assembled on the stand and were now in a state of great excitement. The long and rapid serves were replied to with vigour by the other side. Little berets all of the same pattern turned right or left to follow the ball as from the far distance it sped across the court to cast its shadow on the dazzling whiteness of the wall. One player in particular aroused general enthusiasm. Small and slender of body and supple in his movements, he ran across the court with amazing agility. Sometimes he only saved the ball, to send it hurtling across the ground again, by falling heavily. He seemed indifferent whether he got crushed aginst the wall or leapt up on to the steps of the stand. As he missed a ball a sustained shout of disappointment went up from the crowd.

"What a shame!" said Manuel and Panchua in unison, noting, no sooner had the words left their lips, that they were standing very close to each other in the embrasure of the window. Looking rather furtively at each other the two men felt a little uncomfortable: each had the impression of having met the other before. Then, with the feeling that they ought not to allow themselves to be distracted in this way, the two men scarcely knew what to do and so resumed their contemplation of the game outside.

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The brilliant player by now was wet with perspiration and covered with dust. His sandals were torn and his play had become clumsy. Neither Panchua nor Manuel could conceal his disappointment and expressed his feelings audibly.

"An uneven player," observed the first.

"He went too hard at it at the start," commented the other. "We were better players when we were his age." And, turning to his adversary, Manuel continued "I seem to recognise you. Didn't we once play together?"

"Yes, I think so. But it must have been a long time ago!"

"Wasn't it at Hasparren?"

"That's right! One fête-day we played against the Ithurrart brothers who were then famous players."

"All the same, we beat them!"

The two men sighed as they recalled this victory, a sigh in which sadness and regrets mingled with their pride. In their shining eyes no trace remained of their late hatred for each other. Neither saw any longer in the other a slanderous adversary who must at all costs be beaten, only the skilful and daring player, the splendid comrade of long ago. The simple recalling of a victory shared had succeeded in touching stubborn hearts which neither family affection nor prudent counsels could move.

For some time the two men remained silent. Then, suddenly, almost timidly, Manuel turned to Panchua. "What about our trees?" he enquired.

"Our trees? We'll play a game of muss for them!" Panchua replied with a cheerful smile.

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8. Three Children At Play .

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THREE CHILDREN AT PLAY.

Jean Pierre Irazabal had been in America ten years when the War broke out.

At first his only feeling was one of satisfaction at being so far away from the danger zone and being spared the necessity of deserting hastily. True, he reflected, it would be a nuisance not to be able to end his days at Aïnhoa, where he was born, but the unpleasant fancy soon vanished. He knew the mountain passes well and when war was over he could take advantage of nightfall to slip across the frontier at Etchelar or Dancharinea without risk to himself. Jean Pierre felt convinced, too, that some day the Government would relent and that, sooner or later, all would be forgotten.

So it was that with ironical pity Jean Pierre watched his companions in exile leave one by one for France. When through the newspapers he was able to realise more clearly the horrors of the trenches he was overjoyed that he could still continue in safety in this great Chilean city his quiet but industrious existence.

All the same he was changing a little. Something of his natural light-heartedness was leaving him and he was losing the unaffected gaiety which is the birthright of the true Basque. He quickly grew irritable when the war was mentioned and, with queer lack of logic, showed signs of anger whenever foreigners blamed France for the war or praised her for her supreme valour.

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Little by little a great sadness overcame himand he ended by shunning the society of his friends.

One Sunday, having nothing to do and feeling rather bored, he strolled aimlessly through a quarter of the city that he hardly knew. It was a populous suburb packed with working-class dwellings At long intervals the leafy green of a clump of trees stood out sharply against the azure sky. Women sat gossiping on their doorsteps and Jean Pierre watched with amusement the children scampering and shrieking in the dust.

Suddenly he stopped short. In a narrow courtyard three small boys were playing pelota against a cracked wall. They were Basques. Even before he heard what they were saying Jean Pierre had guessed as much from the supple grace of their movements.

"Hiri! (For you!) Chemartin"

"Yo!" (Hit it!)

"Bego!" (Leave it!)

The ball hit the old wall and to Jean Pierre it seemed as if it had struck his heart. A mist came before his eyes: the image of the foreign city faded away. In the place of the workmen's dwellings he saw the pleasing outlines of a Basque village nestling under a mauve-coloured mountain crowned with a rocky summit. The agile youngster to his left who had just hit the pelota seemed to be Jean Pierre himself, yes, Jean Pierre as he was as a boy, playing until the bells rang out for Vespers and interrupted his game. Then he would resume later and leave off playing only when the ball was a grey dot in the uncertain light and the melancholy croaking of the frogs rose from the

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still-warm stone flags.

Jean Pierre failed to notice the passers-by who brushed against him. In happy imagination he was far away in the Basque country, listening to the gentle, warm wind from the South whispering in the oaktrees and the cool plash of the fountains. He saw the gaily painted houses, with their red or green beams, in the beautiful street of Aïnhoa, the slow-moving haycarts, the maize fields and the hazy blue distance. And there, close at hand, its white walls rising above the bracken, stood the little church where he had so often said his prayers. The faces of loved ones appeared phantom-like in his soothing dream.

Jean Pierre awoke with a start. The noise of a passing motor broke the charm and he thought with bitterness of the distance which separated him from the land of his birth. He slowly resumed his walk but a great sadness had descended upon him which nothing he could do would dispel. The charm of his birthplace had gripped him too fast for all homesickness to vanish in an instant. He now saw only too clearly what must be the consequences of his desertion. When the war was over he would be forced to live in Spain, only able to gaze down from the heights of the frontier on the beautiful Basque country and never able to set foot in it again. If ever he saw Aïnhoa again it must be by stealth and by night, never in the radiant splendour of the midday sun.

Even should his hopes be realised and an amnesty benefit those who had failed to join the Colours, would he be cynical enough to

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return home with any vestige of self respect to a country that would be in deep mourning and where his very presence must affront many who could not fail toregard him with shame or hatred?

Jean Pierre no longer tried to excuse himself with the pretence that he was a Basque, not a Frenchman, and that the Basque country stood in no risk of invasion. No, these were a coward's excuses! The French and the Basques were one nation. Why, when he himself talked to a Basque from Irun or Fontarrabie he felt, all the time, thatthere was a something in him which distinguished him from those other Basques, some subtle, indefinable but still real difference which was a source of secret pride to him. Was it to be left to others to save, to give their lives perhaps for the land which he loved so passionately, and for Jean Pierre to do nothing? He felt that if he then went back to Aïnhoa he would never have a moment's happiness there.

Night had fallen when Jean Pierre returned from his walk. He was now calm and sure of himself. He had just left his employer whom he had informed of his intention of leaving at once to fight for France.

On a bright Spring day, as the swallows were flying swiftly across the skies, Jean Pierre Irazabal saw again the village where he was born.

When the young soldier, feeling rather awkward in his muddy trench coat, landed from the noisy little steamer that had brought him on leave, the first thing he saw was three small boys playing pelota. The "American" watched them with a gentle

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interest, for they brought back to his mind those little players in exile, thanks to whom he felt that he had been able proudly to prove that he was a good Frenchman because he was a good Basque.

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9. H O M E .

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HOME.

"Ah, Dios mio! I'll never go back to that life." Doña Dominga always put into the phrase all the horrors with which the hard times of her peasant childhood inspired her, when she indulged in reminiscences. Her daughters, who knew only the careless joys of a life of ease, laughed when they heard this speech but their father grew pensive and heaved a sigh.

Like his wife, Don Pedro Iguren had not forgotten the cares and privation and toil that had been the lot of their early days. The contrast between their hard youth and their present easy circumstances rather served to embitter the recollection of their past misery. Often when in the course of dinner or at some evening festivity mention was made of of the beautiful Basque country, so dear to the exile's heart, Don Pedro and his wife would have nothing to say. They pictured their miserable childhood - a little girl whose towsled hair was kept up under her shapeless hat by a single pin; a small boy who carefully removed his sandals when it rained and, to save them, walked barefooted through the mud. Yet, in all their childhood, this had been the happiest period. Later, unhappier days had come, when, sent to earn their living on a farm, they had toiled from daybreak until the Angelus rang out at sunset. Long summer days with the sun's burning rays blistering and burning their faces, and hands sore from the

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rough spade. Gusty, ice-cold wintry days when the frozen soapsuds had to be broken before washing could begin in the glacial stream and the cattle must be driven along the ice-encrusted roads. Short nights, when happy slumber was interrupted all too soon by cockcrow. Week after week with only a break for Church on Sundays in the monotonous round of toil.

When they married their worldly wealth, despite their past industry, amounted to no more than eighteen hundred francs and three pairs of sheets. With the black clothes they wore on their wedding day, these were all they took with them to America, where they had a vague hope of joining an uncle who at rare intervals sent them news of himself. They had found their uncle at once and he turned out to be a rich bachelor and very kind to them. Overjoyed to get into touch with his family again, he took Pedro and Dominga to live with him and made a great fuss of them.

The sudden change in their lives did the young couple no harm. Pedro, it is true, soon lost that air of submission to authority which is the badge of a good workman, while Dominga easily acquired the thousand refinements of a woman of fashion. Her daughters found it hard to believe nowadays that her hands had once been rough and red from manual toil.

The feeling of surprise which they had experienced when the change had come in their lives had never wholly left them and Pedro and Dominga most earnestly desired to display their

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wealth in the village which had seen their early poverty. It would not suffice that they should restore the house in the Rue de Mendoza, adding an imposing frontage, and that their car should be seen about the village . To get full enjoyment out of their fortune they must build a new house near the tiny grass-grown pelota ground or the little square where the bracken had begun to grow amid the littered straw. Their car must be seen mounting the cobbled slope that led to the church or rolling luxuriously through the fields of maize and beetroot. Thus it came to pass that when they spoke of going back to the Basque country Pedro and Dominga were never of the same opinion as their children. "We must have a villa at Biarritz," the daughters would say, but their parents would argue for settling in Souraïde.

Even after they had left the Argentine and got as far as Paris the question was unsettled.

Paris! The daughters had at once determined to remain there for ever! Not so, Pedro and Dominga, who evinced a sudden, feverish haste to see again the cluster of cottages round the modest brown-tiled church of their mountain home. Their hearts craved for the clumps of oaktrees, the round hills and the cherry trees along the roadside, and after a few days they could contain themselves no longer. Leaving their girls in charge of some friends of the family, they set off in their car to the Basque country.

They arrived at Souraïde one golden summer evening after a sweltering hot day. The chimes from the belfry sounded

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sad and mournful to their ears: the days reminded them so poignantly of those that they had once known that Pedro and Dominga almost doubted whether so many years had rolled by. Had they changed at all in the time?

Next morning, when they awoke in their room at the inn, Pedro threw open the window and laughed with delight as he saw the sun gilding the church spire. "How spendid to be here," he cried, "without having to get up to spray the vine or drive a cart."

"Isn't it nice to be rich? "remarked Dominga ecstatically, looking at her jewels and scentbottles spread out on the dressing tableand the dresses which she had hastily unpacked the previous evening. Forgetting her ill-natured intention of impressing her former friends with her wealth, she chose her simplest dress. Elegance would have been out of place in these simple surroundings. Besides, Don Pedro had forsaken his sombrero for a beret and was wearing sandals instead of shoes.

Their natural kindness of heart kept them from displaying their riches in front of all these poor people, and their car remained in the garage to which it had been sent on their arrival. The 'American' and his wife went on foot from farm to farm. Dominga grew sad when she noticed how her old friends had aged from working in the fields; their stooping forms and thin faces and toothless gums made her shudder not a little. Either from a wish not to emphasise the difference between herself and the rest or because she did not think it worth while to look smart when there was no one to admire her, she

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even began to neglect her appearance a little. Her fine dresses remained in the wardrobe and her jewels were put away. A mantilla seemed more convenient for going to Mass and one day when she went to market at Espelette with the innkeeper's wife, the mantilla again seemed more suitable than a hat.

On Sundays Pedro did not get back from pelota until late in the evening. He returned to the inn flushed and in high spirits, delighted with playing muss the whole afternoon with a pelota player, a smuggler and a cattle-driver, who had lied continuously with incredible audacity.

"We ought to see about getting into a house of our own", Dominga would sometimes remark, feeling ashamed of herself for thinking so little of future plans.

Pedro would shrug his shoulders when he heard this. The children were happy in Paris and were asking to prolong their stay there. Each letter to their parents described the marvels of the Metropolis and Pedro and Dominga smiled as they read the enthusiastic accounts of their children.

Good Heavens! Wasn't their life at the inn as pleasant? they reflected, provided, of course, that one shared in the general bustle and noise. The 'Americans' knew how to join in the work as well as the pleasure. Pedro, with his hands in his pockets and collar discarded, would eagerly join in the remarks of customers who came in for a drink, while Dominga grew positively peevish when she had nothing to do. She stayed long in the kitchen, nursed the children

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and shelled the peas, not even disdaining to stain her fingers by removing the stones from the black cherries. She encouraged her husband to eat his dinner occasionally in the coffee room of the inn, where he could smoke his pipe at his ease with his arms on the table. Then she would remain in the kitchen or drink her soup standing at the door, listening with real emotion as her husband's voice mingled with the others - the same strong, musical voice of the early days.

All the while the summer went on. The days wre drawing near when the wild pigeons would take their flight. The soft, burning winds from the South played over the countryside, bringing along in their trail autumnal perfumes of smouldering dry leaves and cider apples, and the fragrance of the cêpes under the oaktrees, and the acrid fumes of the casks being prepared for the vintage.

One Sunday morning Pedro, who had been out with his gun, returned, proudly bringing a string of mushrooms for his wife. He found Dominga gathering wild herbs in the kitchen garden. While they were talking an old man came hobbling up to them, bringing a telegram from their children. "Leaving Paris tomorrow," it read. "Please say where we shall join you."

The blue form fell from Pedro's fingers. He looked up at his wife and she returned his look. They each had the vision of their daughters arriving unexpectedly and catching sight of them as they were that morning. For the first time each noticed ih the other that want of attention to appearances

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which had not worried them for many a day. Pedro felt that he must look grotesque, with a coloured handkerchief knotted round his neck and the string of mushrooms on his arm. He felt annoyed, too, at the sight of his wife in threadbare slippers, holding a rake in her hands. "Need we have them here?" he asked almost timidly.

"No. Let them join us at Biarritz," answered Dominga despondently, throwing down her rake.

They left Souraïde next day. In the restaurant where they took their dinner that evening, they felt strangely embarrassed but the noise of the jazz band enabled them to keep silence. They thought of the peaceful nights, now left behind, of the darkness pierced by glow worms, the monotonous croaking of the frogs, the gossips at the door of the inn, the strains of the accordeon in the parlour, but dared not speak of them.

"Shall we look for a villa?" said Pedro, lighting his pipe in the interval between two tunes.

"Yes, and a good staff of servants," answered Dominga thoughtfully. They dared not own up to their grief at having turned their backs for ever on their village home, because they were afraid of displaying to their children those simple tastes which had been reborn in them.

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10. The Absent One.

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THE ABSENT ONE.

"If you had known him, you would understand my sorrow. From Souraïde to Bayonne there wasn't a more lovable man." Marie Louise of Hegoaldeko-borda sighed mornfully every time she made this remark and her clear eyes had a far-off tender look. Bending over the water's edge she would remain silent for a moment and wring out the soap suds from the linen she was washing. Respecting her grief, her companion Matiacha dared not ask her any questions.

Every week the two young women met each other at the Public Washing Place at Arrubia. They first saw each other on St. Martin's Day when Matiacha and her parents came to Souraïde as the new tenants of Aldapa-behera.

Arrubia was a pretty spot standing in the midst of great round-topped oaks with enormous roots that spread out far over the mossy ground. The stream widened at this point into a clear shining pool which caught the sun's rays as they struck the sandy islets, to lose themselves in the waterfall under the old bridge. Here Matiacha and Marie Louise did their washing

The girls grew very fond of this sheltered spot. The massive masonry of the bridge kept off the wind in bad weather and protected them from the sun's rays when it grew too hot. All day long a stream of people crossed the funny little bridge. Sometimes a cattle drover would lag behind his flock for a few moments to pass the time of day with the two pretty

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laundresses. Sometimes the douaniers would come along and lean over the parapet to laugh and flirt and joke with the girls as they smked cigarette after cigarette and whiled away many an idle hour.

Matiacha with her merry eyes and smiling face was always ready with a smart remark or a ready answer, but Marie Louise met all approaches with the curtest acknowledgment and was shy to the point of rudeness with anyone who ventured to address her.

Matiacha could not understand her friend's attitude and one day summoned up courage to ask her the reason. Marie Louise had then admitted that she was not in the least interested in any of the men who paid her these hasty attentions; for many years she had loved a young man who was now away in America. Until this confession Matiacha might have had reason to complain of her friend's taciturnity but once the flood-gates were raised Marie Louise never stopped. Matiacha had no objection, however, for she took a passionate interest in Marie Louise's story.

Marie Louise related everything with a wealth of detail except for one thing: she never mentioned the young man's name. To the two friends he became 'The Absent One'. What romantic visions the name conjured up to them!

Marie Louise described to her friend her lover's tall, slender and agile form, his gentle eyes and thick curly hair, the elegant grace with which he walked, his skill as a pelota player, and how swiftly he could dart across the

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court in pursuit of the elusive ball. She described him in Church with folded arms, head erect and firm steps descending the stairs from the gallery with the offertory. She gave a picture of him at harvest time with a red scarf knotted round his slim waist, sharpening his scythe. Her heart grew sad as she thought of the Sunday evenings they had spent together in the deserted pelota ground when, with head thrust well-forward and hands in his pockets, the young lover would sing in his strong, clear tones:

"Charmegarria zira eder eta gazte?" (You are my young and beautiful charmer), or

"Adios izar ederra." (Farewell, beautiful star.)

As she bent her head under cover of the darkness these songs came back to Marie Louise and she remembered piously the words of endearment which her lover had used to her alone. She was his one and only love, theonly girl to whom he had ever paid attention, though many a young heart had been deliciously stirred by his good looks. Any parent in the village would gladly have accepted him as a son-in-law: he was so pleasant and hard-working and M. le Curé was always prepared to give him a good character for regular attendance at Church. Still, he was very young, barely seventeen, and so poor, so very poor that, tempted by letters which he had received from a cousin in America, he had gone abroad in the hopes of making his fortune.

"Do you ever have news of him now?" asked Matiacha.

"Rarely...And no one but my parents know that we

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are engaged."

"Has he been away long?"

"Nearly eight years; it's a long time since he went."

And Marie Louise went on reciting her idyll. She spoke of the delight of the dewy, twilight evenings, when the young lover had come over to Hegoaldeko-borda, and of the joyous mornings when they had met on the way to market. Then she went on to tell of an evening during the Fair when they had been ever so many times on the Merry-go-round and of a wedding at which he had been best man, and how once they had met by chance on the road to Bayonne, and of how one Corpus Christi day he had played a drum in the Church orchestra.

As she spoke Marie Louise seemed to see the smiling, handsome face of her beloved standing out through the mist of her happy recollections and to hear his tuneful voice above the rolling cadence of the drum in the brilliantly-lit, incense laden church. The heavy scent of the massed flowers and the fading roses came back to her nostrils.

Matiacha was almost as moved as Marie Louise herself as she listened to her friend's descriptions. "Have you any hope that he will come back soon?" she asked.

"Most certainly so," replied Marie Louise with fervour.

When, therefore, the girl showed herself either indifferent or disdainful when passers_by paid her a compliment and was lost in thought, doubtless of the Absent One, Matiacha looked at Marie Louise with mild astonishment tempered with envy.

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Marie Louise's confidences had to be interrupted for a few months on account of a visit which Matiacha paid to one of her sisters at Helette. It was not until December that Matiacha started on the return journey to Souraide and to kill the monotony of the long drive in the tumble-down stage coach, she entered into conversation with her fellow-travellers. "Has anything been happening at Souraide while I've been away?" she enquired.

"Not much....except that Marie Louise of Hegoalde-koborda is getting married." replied someone.

The blood came to Matiacha's face as she heard the news. "Who's she marrying?" she asked.

"The 'American' from Ithurrotchea who came back the other day."

An American, said Matiacha to herself. Then it must be he. The Absent One has come back. She was wildly excited. Happy Marie Louise, she thought. What pleasure it will give her to present her handsme fiancé to her friend.

Matiacha was now eager for the journey to end. She wanted to see The Absent One at once.. Night had fallen, however, before the coach reached Aldapha-behera and there could of course be no question of her going to see Marie Luise that evening. Fortunately the next day was Sunday. Matiacha went to High Mass and - not for the first time- on entering the Church succumbed to the temptation to let her eyes stray up to the gallery where the young men sat. Neither there, nor under

the porch, nor in the body of the Church could she detect the lover. She experienced a further disappointment on leaving the building. The only stranger to be seen amongst the groups assembled outside was a large, fat man with a smooth red face.

"Who is that man?" Matiacha enquired of her father.

"That's the American from Ithurrotchea who is to marry your friend Marie Louise."

Is that her beloved? Matiacha asked herself. Is that The Absent One? the handsome fiancé? Is Marie Louise going to give herself to an ugly fellow like that? What could be the reason? How disappointed she must be with the new choice?

With beating heart Matiacha set out later in the day to find Marie Louise. Before she could allude to the fatal subject of her visit she was struck with the pallor and sad expression of the Bride-to-be. The two friends walked side-by-side to the Church. It was a cold grey afternoon and the chimes ringing out for Vespers across the distance. All colour had gone from the fields, the hedges had lost their leaves and showed brown in the landscape, and mist blotted out the mountains. Here and there a tuft of osiers lent a splash of colour to the sad scene.

"Marie Louise, I have seen your fiancé," Matiacha began.

"Yes" replied Marie-Louise nervously, "What do you think of him?"

"I...I don't know. But..but Marie Lo uise, what has

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happened to the other man?"

Marie Louise looked at her strangely for a moment and then burst into tears. "Matiacha," she sobbed, "never, never speak of him to me again, I beg you. Never!"

The subject was never broached again between the two girls. From that day The Absent One was never mentioned by either but each very well, knew that his image never left the other's mind.

When the two girls now met at the washplace at Arrubia time would have passed less easily if it had not been for the American, who often came to the bridge to smoke a pipe. His presence vexed Matiacha, who would have preferred one of the Customs men and it seemed to afford no satisfaction to poor Marie Louise. He was a good enough fellow all the same and his laugh rang out joyously on every occasion. He openly admitted that he had had so hard a time over in America that he wanted a little gaiety to make up for his last sadness. But Marie Louise remained so depressed through it all that at last he could not fail to notice it.

One day he spoke of this to Matiacha. Marie Louise was sad, he told her. Did Matiacha know the reason why? Matiacha, thoroughly taken aback, protested that she knew nothing about it. Her obvious embarrassment did not escape the American's notice and, under his close-questioning, she could keep her secret no longer. She stammered, got tied into knots, and finished by creating an impression in his mind, without, however, making any precise statement,

that Marie Loise had had a love disappointment and had wanted to marry a young fellow now in America.

"Tell me his name!" demanded the man imperiously.

"I don't know it" Matiacha had had to admit, feeling a little ashamed of herself for having betrayed her friend and growing frightened by the American's strange look.

The shadow of The Absnt One thus came between the two fiancés and threatened their future happiness. The unhappy man was burning toquestion his fiancée but dared not do so. He was therefore consumed with jealousy and felt that he would go mad with rage and grief. One morning he could stand it no longer and went straight to Matiacha and said to her sharply: "Your half-confidences are poisoning my life. I insist upon your telling me all that you know!"

For a moment Matiacha thought of refusing and then succumbed once again to the pleasure of telling her friend's secrets. With all Marie Louise's enthusiasm she repeated, down to the smallest detail, the account of The Absent One which she had had from Marie Louise. She described his appearance, bragged of his skill as a pelota player, his upright character, his great physical beauty. She gave particulars of the Fair, and the Wedding, and the incident of Corpus Christi. As she was speaking the American's face lightened: all these souvenirs described himself. He was the pelota player, he was the singer, it was he who had played the drum.. The Absent One was none other than himself!

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His delight soon passed, however, and a great sadness overcame him. Had he changed so greatly that when she had seem him again Marie Louise had felt such a great disappointment that she dared not voice it even to her friend?

Yes, that was evidently the case. His eight years in America had completely altered him. He had grown fat and his hair was getting thin. He had left his youth behind on the other side of the Atlantic and it was only his triumphant youth that had left any indelible mark on Marie Louise's heart.

The American's silence surprised Matiacha and she grew frightened that she had told him so much. She now tried to obliterate the disastrous effect of her words. "That was only a silly little romance, of no importance whatever," she explained. "I am certain that in no time Marie Louise will have forgotten all about it."

"Forgotten", echoed the American. And to Matiacha's astonishment he repeated, just as Marie Louise would have done, in tones which betrayed far more pride than bitterness, "If you had known him, you would have understood his grief. He is the sort of man who is never forgotten."

@ @ @ @

The American and Marie Louise have long since banished their painful memories. Only Matiacha has failed to understand and she still awaits The Absent One's return. She fears that he will be terribly grieved when he finds that Marie Louise has married but she comforts herself with the proud reflection that she at least will be there to console him.

him.

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11. Pettane's Logic .

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PETTANE'S LOGIC .

Although he always wore a beret and walked about in white canvas sandals, carrying a maquila of bamboo pretentiously swinging from his wrist, Monsieur Bernard never succeeded in making anyone believe that he was a Basque.

God alone knew, however, what desperate efforts he had made for years not to be treated as a stranger and to persuade others to forget that he had been born under other skies, as he himself had forgotten from the day when he came under the luminous radiance of our own.

Unhappily, his passionate desire to be regarded as one of themselves, instead of flattering his neighbours, merely exasperated them. It was to no purpose that when M. Bernard spoke of the Eskual-herri, he would say '<u>our</u> country' , '<u>our</u> traditions'; in vain he made the discovery that one of his great-grandfathers had come from the Pyrenees; his admirably persistent attempts to woo municipal honours were of no avail; it served him not to discover no less than twenty different origins of the Euskarien peoples. These tricks deceived no one and there was not a soul in the district but could prove that not one drop of true Basque blood ran through the veins of Monsieur Bernard.

Had he, for example, ever been seen in an inn cheek by jowl with a tralurari and a farm labourer? Could he play

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a hand at muss? If ever he went to the judge's stand when a pelota match was being played, was it not to ask a lot of silly questions which drove the 'chacharis' to frenzy. He couldn't even pronounce the few Basque words he had acquired with such difficulty without making his hearers rock with laughter. He didn't even know how to throw the ball. When he touched it, the ball went off at a tangent and hit a neighbouring roof instead of hitting the wall ahead.

No, this Southerner-from-the-North or Northern-Southerner - it was difficult to know which to call him - was a transplanted object clinging to the Basques as the ivy tries to cling to oak.

Avoided by everyone in the village, there was nobody to say a good word for him had it not been for Pettane, the metayer. Pettane was a great, good-natured fellow, less suspicious and more talkative than the ordinary native of Labourd, and he did his best to persuade others to share his liking for the "Cascoin." "He's a good fellow, not nearly so stuck up as you think," Pettane would explain, and then go on to relate how the stranger often came to Chiquitoinea to tell him the political gossip and, on one occasion, had even brought him a cutting from a plum tree, which, however, had not struck. The kind apologist went on to find excuses for all M. Bernard's little failings, of which his neighbours complained. It was indeed impossible to deny that his friend would greet a man one day and not even look at him on the next,

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but that, no doubt, was the way with all Cascoins and wouldn't be thought rude anywhere else but amongst the Basques. It was true, too, that when M. Bernard paid his men their wages, he never thought of thanking them - and everyone knows how warmly the true Basque responds to a word of thanks - but the omission was surely due to oversight or else shyness, surely nôt to any feeling of contempt on his part as some sensitive souls had supposed. When he had asked M. le Cure to preach in French, he had not reflected that thus would have m et meant that countless peasants who knew nothing but Basque would have gone without their sermon. If he was not more agreeable in his manners, this was because M. Bernard still suffered from being looked upon as an outsider, as much so as he had been on the day of his arrival. "To please us all," ended Pettane sententiously,"the man would have to be perfect and that's impossible, as we all know. Even the ants, tiny as they are, throw a shadow."

Pettane, in his sympathy for the friendless townsman, took him to his heart. He generously helped him with his garden, stood by his side at High Mass, and, so as to converse with him more readily, even began to learn French. His "s'il vous plait" were pronounced with an elegance which earned the outspoken praise of all.

One day M. Bernard was in a very confidential mood and he confessed to his friend that his greatest dream was to own not only his little house and strip of garden in the village but a good sized estate which he could visit every day.

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The worthy Pettane took as much trouble about the business as if it had been his own. He sounded all the neighbouring landlords with great discretion and to get better information, frequented the Markets and visited the Pelota matches. He evn neglected his labours on his own land to be of assistance to his friend "Messie" Bernard. "Ah, Pettane!" Bernard had once said to him, "what I should like is to own an estate like yours. Who is your landlord, by the way?"

Pettane, who was sharpening a fork at the time, left off for a moment to look at his fine clover field, his two plots of maize, and his eyes strayed across to the distant hillock which hid from view his oak trees, whose young foliage was concealing the marks of recently cut timber.

"It's not too bad," he observed in proud tones which belied the modesty of his words. "Still, I've a dreadful landlord, so hard and avaricious and stingey!"

"Won't he sell?" asked Bernard.

Sell! At the very idea Pettane's high shoulders and pointed chin shook with silent mirth. Pettane was sure that he'd never sell the land to anyone.

Pettane's efforts on his friend's behalf met with no success. In vain he told anyone who would listen to him that M. Bernard would be the most accommodating, the best, the most generous of landlords. No one was prepared to sell his land.

Weeks went by and Pettane had abandoned all hope of

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finding an estate for his friend when one fine morning M. Bernard entered the kitchen at Chiquitonea in a state of triumphant happiness.

"Pettane, Pettane. I've got my land. Whose do you think it is? Yours, my friend! I bought it from your landlord without any very great difficulty. I've said nothing to you about the negotiations because I wanted to give you a surprise. From St. MartiN's day I shall be your landlord and you'll see how splendidly we shall get on together."

Pettane's bony face showed no sign of surprise, neither joy nor displeasure. "What did you have to pay for it?" he enquired.

"Sixty thousand francs."

Pettane smiled and shook his head in a way which disconcerted M. Bernard. Then he remarked that the price was too high.

The whole village knew of the purchase by the next day and on the following Sunday everyone came up to Pettaneafter High Mass to congratulate him.

"Well, Pettane!" they said, "aren't you delighted now? You'll be greater friends with M. Bernard than ever now this has happened."

"My relations with him will always be excellent," answered Pettane,"but I shall see him much less frequently in future. I am leaving Chiquitoinea. I've got a little house in the Amotz district."

For a few moments complete silence greeted this astonishing news. At last some one summoned up courage to ask him why he

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was leaving M. Bernard.

Pettane's lips grew scornful and all recollection of past friendship fled from him. "Do you think that I am going to acknowledge that outsider as my landlord?" he said bitterly.

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12. M I K E L A .

MIKELA .

Doubtless in the days when no more than three dozen cottages bordered the roughly cobbled street of the village between the church and the fountain, Chiquitoinea looked no smaller or less attractive than the neighbouring cottages. But now that, to the right, there had sprung up a pretentious villa with pink walls behind a garden gay with hydrangeas, while, on the left, the bakery had added two new floors, old Mikela's little home had become a sorry sight.

Visitors who admired the 'Norman' style of the villa, which passed for Basque architecture, and the square bakery, bright with blue paint, had no eyes for the irregular eaves or rain-discoloured front of the house, which no whitewash could ever brighten. In this over-smart, over-clean village, so beloved of the gaping tourist, Chiquitoinea was always shocking the neighbours. For quite a long time now they had learnt how to hide unpleasant things behind their houses - manure heaps, poultry the grain and straw which once were littered about as far as the pelota ground, - all were now out of sight. But old Mikela still littered the unfenced bit of land in front of Chiquitoinea with the rabbit hutch, firewood and dried vinestalks. There, too, she kept her worn-out sabots and the spade with which, even now, she sometimes tried to get rid of the pushful sorrel and the invading nettles. Alas! in the trembling grasp of the old dame the spade made little impression on these troublesome weeds!

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The poor old soul had grown deaf and walked with difficulty, so she no longer could go out and look after the neighbours' children. She remained sitting at the door all day, telling her rosary. When she spoke, which was but seldom, it was to call down a blessing upon some charitable passerby who had given her some small coin.

The misery of Chiquitoïnea made the villagers sad, although its shabbiness caused them some annoyance. M. le Curé shared this sorrow despite the fact that of all his parishioners Mikela was the one who gave him least cause for satisfaction. Unaided and alone, the old woman made a disturbance at every Sunday's service. As she advanced along the aisle, stooping under her threadbare cloak, Mikela sent a shudder through every other woman in the congregation, while even the men watched her from the galleries above.

From time immemorial those who owned Chiquitoïnea had had the place immediately under the pulpit. There were the two chairs which had belonged to Mikela's grandmother. On reaching the spot Mikela first arranged the chairs noisily, then moved them so as to spread out her black shawl on the floor of the church. Next, she sat down and glanced defiantly to right and left, to see if anyone was trying to trespass upon the space she had thus reserved for herself. Then she made up her mind to murmur her prayers, but her "Ave Maria" and "ora pro nobis" sounded so loud that they were heard by all within earshot.

Whether at High Mass or Vespers, whether M. le Curé was in the pulpit or the Cantor intoning the Creed, Mikela's one interest

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was that her rights were respected by the congregation. Neither exhortations to patience and humility from the pulpit, nor the flickering of the altar candles, nor the choir's more-or-less successful harmonies succeeded in diverting her attention. If, however, on a winter's day a muddy shoe as much as brushed against her black carpet, she scolded audibly. If, when the procession wended its way past, a drop of wax fell on her chair, she voiced a protest. Every Sunday, when an accolyte, holding out his basket of consecrated bread as if it were his chistera (pelota bat), touched her chair as he went by, she reprimanded him noisily. Even M. le Curé himself took care to keep the offertory plate well away from Mikela as it went its round. The old woman, looking fierce and scornful, continued praying contriving, at the same time, to scowl angrily at her neighbour, Chanetta, the baker's aunt.

Chanetta had only recently come back from America and was little disposed to occupy the place in the church reserved for the bakery folk. Their place was in a dark corner, near to the Confessional box, to which the curé would willingly have relegated Mikela. That an interloper like Chanetta should move her seat to the centre of the nave, quite near to her own, Mikela could scarcely endure, though between these two women there had never been such a scandalous scene as had occurred when Mikela found an ignorant stranger occupying her seat. The faithful had enjoyed the ensuing hubbub far more than the curé!

It will be seen therefore that when he succeeded in finding a purchaser for the old woman's cottage M. le Curé could feel

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that he was ensuring happiness for Mikela and peace for his flock during the services of the church.

'What a tumble-down ruin', he reflected, when Mikela led him into the kitchen, the only habitable room of Chiquitoinea. 'Mikela can never regret leaving this'. She was, indeed, delighted with the news he brought. She had never hoped for such a stroke of luck and was overjoyed to learn that someone had offered fifty-five thousand francs for the old ruin. And when the good curé went on to explain that he was proposing that she should go to a hospice in the neighbouring town and spoke gently of the kind nuns in their white whimples, the good meals and the bright, warm rooms she would find there, Mikela was in ecstacies. What would she have to renounce for this paradise? thought the old lady as she looked around her. Nothing but four ruined walls, only held together by the ivy, a miserable kitchen with holes in the flooring through which the toads crowded in summer; and a patch of garden overgrown with mint and verbena through which a stunted pear tree forced its barren branches. What was there now left to recall the days long over when old age and misery had seemd so impossible? What could she now find to regret?

"And who may be the happy purchaser, M. le Curé?" she asked clasping her hands.

"Chanetta, your neighbour's aunt. She has been wanting to build for some time".

Chanetta! At the sound of this name, the old woman ~~stiffened and her hands fell to her~~

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stiffened and her hands fell to her side. As the curé went on speaking, she seemed to see the gaunt figure of her fellow-worshipper and to hear the scraping of the chair whose proximity always annoyed her so intensely. "Then she would have this house and the place in the Church that goes with it, eh?" Mikela asked suddenly, straightening her bent frame.

"Of course, she would," replied the Curé. "not that you will still want it, Mikela, so what does it matter if Chanetta or any one else has your chair? "

The poor old woman shook with silent rage. She looked around her once again. The empty kitchen and her tiny garden seemed to lose something of their squalor. After all, she had always lived in the place. In that cupboard, over there, she kept her prayer book, not that she could read it, and the threadbare cloak in which for so many Sundays she had sallied forth proudly to the Church. "I refuse the offer," she said firmly, "I shall keep this house."

"Don't be silly, Mikela," remonstrated the Curé. "Do you want to keep this house merely to go on living in it like a beggar?"

Mikela tossed her head proudly. "What does it matter if I am a beggar under my own roof, M. le Curé?" she asked, "if I am always a good Christian in the House of the Lord?"

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13. Laziness Rewarded .

LAZINESS REWARDED .

PIARRÉS D'HALDONBEHERBA paced up and down the salla (living room) of his farm.

He was a robust old man of medium height. His thick white curls framed a ruddy clean-shaven face, which was always lighting up with the kindest, brightest smile imaginable.

Everything in his proud carriage and features and his calm but determined expression bespoke energy. It was, indeed, the predominant characteristic of this sturdy old Basque gentleman, who, day in and day out, tended his ancestral inheritance.

Father of thirteen children who, following tradition, were either in America or living under the parental roof, Piarrès was also the master of the old house which stood out on the hill side, proudly displaying its red timbers, overhanging eaves and carved stone windowframes. He owned, too, the woods and meadows which stretched down to the avenue of plane trees and the dusty white road below.

On this particular day Piarrès stopped every time he passed the open window to admire the beauty of his beloved Eskual-Herri. His gaze fell first upon the plain below him, from which, here and there, a brown roof peeped out. Then it rested for a while on the bracken clad hills bathed in sunlight, and finally strayed across to the Rhune and Penã-Plata whose indigo slopes stood out in clear outline against the blue sky.

The old man's eyes rested tenderly on the slopes of his own lands, on the crops which his own hands had sown and the

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trees which he had planted so may years ago. Each furrow in the fields spoke of his unceasing toil.

The salla was the finest and largest room in the house. It was furnished with austere simplicity - a long table, straw-seated chairs of bright hue and an arm chair. On the walls hung crude drawings by his young daughters, a picture of the Sacred Heart, a sprig of laurel leaf blessed by the priest, and a coloured print of Louis-Philippe, then the beloved King of France.

As Haldunbeherea's pacings took him past the half-opened door leading to the kitchen he could see his wife superintending the preparations for the midday meal. In the depths of the hearth-place the two farm-hands, Laurench and Guanés, their work over, were sitting on the carved wooden bench enjoying an idle gossip. Soon fragments of their conversation floated across the kitchen to the master of the house and an all-too-familiar dispute began.

"Laurench, go and get some cider from the cellar for the meal."

"Not I. I went yesterday. To-day it's your turn."

"No, it was my turn all last week. I'm not going!"

"Well, I won't, anyhow!"

Haldunbeherea heard all this and smiled ironically. He stood still for a moment in silent reflection, then drawing a chair to the table and reaching for the ink pot, he sat down and wrote two short notes, which he carefully sealed.

The two farmhands, who by now were sulking in the other room, were awakened from their idle reverie by hearing their names called loudly by their master. They entered the salla together.

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"Zer da Nausia (What is it, Master)?"

"Here are two important letters to be delivered at once. You, Laurench, take this to Donio of Aïnhoa, while you, Guanés, must go to Harameder of Ascain. I want an answer by return. Start at once and get back as quickly as possible."

Neither uttered a word. How could they protest in their master's presence? Without a sound, they went downstairs and set out on their errands.

The burning rays of the noontide sun beat fiercely out-of-doors. Only the ceaseless chirping of the grasshoppers disturbed the silence. All nature seemed asleep in the stifling heat.

The two men had not got far from the house when their tempers began to rise. Fancy having to walk for hours in the torrid heat!. What was the message that the Master must need send so urgently? He could not even give them time for their meal! Why couldn't he have chosen some other time? Still, it was useless to complain, they must obey orders. Soon they reached the point at which their roads parted. Laurench took the winding mountain path to Aïnhoa, while Guanés continued along the white road in the thick dust of which the snakes left their sinuous track as they wriggled out of his way.

Three chimes from the church tower broke the heavy silence as Laurench got back from his errand. On the road to the farm he could see Guanés ahead of him. Although dropping with fatigue, he hastend his steps and caught up his fellow-servant just as their master came to the door to meet them. The two men, scarlet-red and sweating from their exertions, stared at one another with

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amazement: each had a bottle in his hand.

"Master," they said in unison,"this is what they gave me at the farm when they read your letter."

"Yes, there is cider in those bottles," observed Piarrés, looking at each man in turn. "I hope that now you have had to go so far, you will both learn a lesson and next time, whenthe cider is wanted, you won't be so long in making up your minds whose turn it is to get it!"

"In this way - and the anecdote is a true one - this stalwart etcheko-jaun punished laziness and ill-humour.

Piarrés d'Haldunbeherea was my grandfather.

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14. Which was Rich ?

WHICH WAS RICH ?

"BEGNAT won't do any better in America than here. One of these days he'll be very glad to get back to the fireside and a plate of soup at Iriomnea." As the years went by without news of his brother, Begnat, Dominiche of Iriomnea never failed to make this prediction whenever the exile's name was mentioned.

Not that he had ever had any warmer feeling than affectionate contempt for his younger brother. The lad had been sullen and morose, had never taken the least interest in a game of pelota, and wouldn't join the men in a drink, even on holidays.

Sometimes Dominiche thought pityingly of the unhappy existence Begnat must be leading across the seas, only to recall with growing pride that, without having to lead a life of adventure for it, he, Dominiche, owned a solid old house, some lush meadows not an hour from the village, not to speak of a neat little vine that ran along the hill, a barn near-by, eleven head of cattle, and three long-tailed ponies with thick manes and bells that tinkled merrily as night fell.

One fine day, however, startling news reached the village from some returned emigrants from Ustaritz. It seemed that Begnat was now a tanner at Buenos Ayres and had made a fortune.
It did not take Dominiche long to persuade himself that he had always been a believer in his brother's lucky star. What unending satisfaction the thought of his rich brother gave him; he never ceased to talk of him! By degrees he grew so accustomed to the idea that some day B

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fortune to his nephews and nieces that, in the end, Dominiche looked upon it as already his and considered that Begnat ought not to remain so long abroad with money which belonged to Irioïnea! Ah! once the money was safely under the family roof Dominiche wouldn't be slow in finding a good use for it! The mere thought of the fortune that would be his some day led the good man to despise a certain six thousand francs tied up in an old handkerchief in his desk, though that sum represented many years of hard-won savings from the sale of timber.

Dominiche now began to notice flaws at Irioïnea which he had never observed before. Its walls, save for the front of the farm which had a coat of whitewash on Rogation Days, had not seemed to call for attention since the day he married. Now, however, they looked sordid and he was troubled by the innumerable cracks in the roof, the state of the floors, the inadequate stabling, and the worn-out bread-oven in the kitchen. He determined to make great changes at Irioïnea, to purchase the adjoining lands and a flock of sheep, to procure a trap and two domestics.

At first his wife and children were the sole confidants of these plans but it was not long before he was relating them to all and sundry, particularly to his sceptical and envious neighbour, José d'Haitzea, whose forced enjoyment gave Dominiche no little satisfaction.

One fine day, the brother from overseas, after having kept them all waiting so long, at last arrived at Irioïnea. It took little time for Dominiche to discover that neither exile nor

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good fortune had changed his disposition. He hardly spoke, was as suspicious as ever, and haggled over a franc just as he used to do. Before many days the good folk at Irioïnea had to admit, to their great consternation, that though the 'American' might be rich enough, he was most certainly a miser, too!

What a deception for them all! For some time Dominiche held obstinately to his belief that Begnat would present him with a nice little sum, but there came a day when the 'American' stated categorically that he had made his money without any help and that he intended to dispose of it unaided.

It took poor Dominiche a long time to get over the shock. For, no sooner had the news of Begnat's return got round than a regular procession of beggars came to Irioïnea. First, the old man from Maloenea, whose bad arm prevented him from working and who must beg for his living if no one would assist him; then the Arbonne cousins who wanted a few hundred francs for their daughter's marriage; then the relations from Ascain who hoped to buy a Breton cow. Dominiche, torn between the shame of having to own up to his brother's avarice and the fear of meeting with a refusal from him, ended by putting his hand into his own pocket and repeating regularly that he 'would arrange matters with the 'American'.

Fortunately, though his dreams might have been shattered, his daily life remained unchanged. It did not need his brother's wealth to ripen the vines, or to make the rich crop weigh down the maze stalks, or to send the sharp fragrance from the cider apples across the orchard. The six thousand francs lay safely hidden in the handkerchief and regained their oldrespect in the mind of

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Dominiche. Had it not been for his earlier folly in talking so much and so imprudently about the fortune which never came to him, he would doubtless have ended by forgetting his disappointment. As things stood, an unworthy fear of what folks would say of him obsessed him for a long while. Still, in the end he put up with being the butt of the village wits. He only shrugged his shoulders when he thought of the guffaws of that great booby, Manech, or the slanderous insinuations which would come from the twisted mouth of back-biting old Ganichon of Aldapa. Even the merciless sarcasm of that miserable old José d'Haitzea failed to move him.

"They all make fun of me, and I deserve it," he repeated to himself, finding pleasure even in his humiliation. So, one day, to assure himself that the whole thing was not a dream, he decided to speak to his old friend Gorgorio when the two of them were away in the hills, shooting wild pigeons from the cover of a stunted oak tree.

Gorgorio felt no diffidence in telling him everything. "It is quite true," he admitted. They do make fun of the 'American' but not of you. Their feeling for you, *Gaichua* , is one of compassion."

"*Gaichua*" (poor fellow)! He felt sick to the soul at this deadly insult. It was only with the most stenuous effort that he succeeded in stemming the torrent of abuse that rose to his lips. He was so upset by the conversation that not a single bird fell to his gun for the rest of the afternoon. The autumn days went by - those beautiful October days so beloved of the sportsman, when the South winds whisper gently through the colouring bracken

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and the golden sunlight enriches the reddening landscape. But Dominiche thought nothing of the tempting coveys that darkened the clear sky in their flight: Gorgorio's words haunted him hour by hour and he grew angrier each time he thought of them. To what a pass had come such great expectation, so much boastful chatter, redeemed by so much courage and good humour! They pitied him! Was it not more galling, more cruel, to be an object of compassion than to be the butt of their jokes or even to have been so grossly deceived?.

From the moment that Dominiche learnt what people were thinking of him, time dragged heavily on his hands. The poor fellow no longer dared to go to the café or to be seen anywhere. On Sundays he now went to the earliest service, to hide himself in the darkness of the Church.

One morning as Dominiche was working in the fields he had a visit from José d'Haitzea. "Dominiche," he pleaded," my landlord is demanding the four thousand francs I owe him and I haven't a sou. I can think only of your brother Begnat, who is so rich that he can't refuse to lend me the money."

For a moment Dominiche was too surprised to speak, then, clearing his throat, he stammered "I will ask him, but...but... when do you want the money?"

"By Sunday. Can I rely on you, Dominiche?"

"Yes, certainly."

The next week was terrible. Dominiche's courage entirely failed him when he tried to broach the fateful subject. More than once he decided to begin. On the first occasion he was

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milking the cows while Begnat good-naturedly held a lantern for him; the next time was just before going to bed, after he had said his prayers; the third time when the brothers were on their way to Espelette one afternoon. In the end, however, he was always overcome by the thought of Begnat's meanness and so said nothing.

Sad and discouraged, Dominiche felt sure that Begnat would refuse to help and then, what would his own reputation be worth? How he would be pitied on all sides when it got known that his brother wouldn't even lend him the wherewithal to help a friend in need! "Poor creature!!" "Gisa gaichur, forsaken by his own brother, bowed down by toil and family cares!" As he seemed to hear words so mortally wounding to his proud soul ring in his ears, he blushed for the very shame of it.

As for José d'Haitzea, he feared greatly that his appeal would not be met and arrived at Iriońinea in the dusk of a Saturday evening, feeling more than anxious. "Well?" he asked his neighbour, "what does your brother say?" For reply, Dominiche drew out of his pocket an old leather wallet and handed some notes to José. "Here's the money, José," he added, "but don't let my brother know anything about it as I'm lending you my own money!"

"Your own money?", asked Jose in astonishment, "but what about that wealthy brother of yours ? "

Dominiche sadly watched his beautiful, long-cherished bank-notes disappearing between José's dirty fingers. Drawing, for his own benefit, a comparison between the generosity of a poor man

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and the avarice of wealthy Begnat, he could not resist the pleasure of surprising José yet again. " Our American, no doubt, has a good many pesos but, if you must know the truth, I am richer than he is!," he observed, his heart swelling with pride as he gulped down his bitterness.

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