

SPANISH TESTAMENT

by

ARTHUR KOESTLER

With an Introduction by

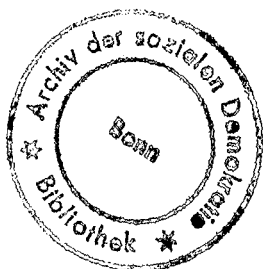
THE DUCHESS OF ATHOLL

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TO
SIR PETER CHALMERS-MITCHELL



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PART II
DIALOGUE WITH DEATH

The condemned cell is a favourite theme for writers: in this case a writer actually found himself in one. The experimenter became identical with the rabbit.

It is, however you look at it, a ticklish situation. The experimenter suffers all the pangs of the victim, and this dims the sharpness of his perception; the rabbit becomes an introspective rabbit, and thereby the naturalness of its sufferings is affected.

From the professional point of view the situation is one that does not bear discussion. Personal feelings and intimate emotions are the very things a journalist ought not to have. But in this case the subjective has become the object of the journalist's theme.

Nevertheless I believe that this book is justified. On two grounds. In the first place I believe that most people, when they read in the newspapers of a death sentence, are curious to know what goes on in the mind of the condemned man. Here an attempt is made to give as far as possible a frank and honest answer to this question. "So far as possible" in that the author resists all temptation to cut a good figure; in that he refrains, however, from crossing the line that divides the sphere of literature from the sphere of psychological exhibitionism.

In the second place, I believe that every war, in particular the Spanish Civil War, consists of ten per cent action and ninety per cent passive suffering. In this respect this account of the hermetically-sealed Andalusian mortuaries may perhaps more truly reflect the Spanish tragedy than messages from the front.

I dedicate it to my friend Nicolás, an obscure soldier of the Spanish Republic, who on the fourteenth of April, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, the anniversary of the proclamation of that Republic, was shot dead in the prison of Seville.

SECOND PART

DIALOGUE WITH DEATH

“Une vie ne vaut rien—mais
rien ne vaut une vie . . .”
(André Malraux, “Les Conquérants”.)

I

THEY CAME ON Monday afternoon.

But as yet it is only Sunday. There is yet time to get away. It is dusk, and the sombre, flaccid shadows of the Andalusian night are rapidly closing in round the dying Malaga. No electric light. No trams. No policemen at the corners of the streets. Nothing but darkness, no sound but the death-rattle of a strangled city: a shot, a drunken, muttering cry, a whimpering somewhere in the next street.

Militiamen run through the streets, demented, aimless. Women in black mantillas flit along like bats in the shadows of the houses. From somewhere or other comes the sound of splintering glass—the window of a car.

It may be half an hour ago that I jumped out of Alfredo's car and began to wander through the streets. There is no longer anyone in control, anyone in authority; there are no public services left in the city; its very bones have gone soft, its nerves, sinews, muscles, are decomposing, the highly developed organism has degenerated into an amorphous jelly-fish. What is the agony of an individual compared with the agony of a city! Death is a natural biological process, but here a whole social organism, the very foundations of civilization itself, is out of joint. The dutiful taxpayer is once more the primitive herd animal, and in his shortsighted eyes behind their horn-rimmed spectacles lurks atavistic fear.

On this Sunday night, the seventh of February, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, a new St. Bartholomew's Night is being openly made ready. An army of foreign invaders is encamped beyond the hills, recouping its strength in order, to-morrow, to invade these streets and drench them in the blood of people whose language they do not understand, with whom they have no quarrel, and of whose very existence they were yesterday as unaware as to-morrow they will be indifferent to their deaths.

There is still time to get away. . . .

Sir Peter's house is on a hill half a mile outside the town. I wander across the dark fields and find myself outside the park gate of a large, villa-like building. I assume it is the hospital we saw burning early this morning. Now it is dark and deserted, an enchanted castle. I knock for a long time on the door of the porter's lodge; after a while the porter appears, grasping a revolver. His whole body trembles and the revolver trembles with it.

"Is this the hospital?"

"There's no hospital here."

"What is this house, then?"

"This is Señor Bolín's house."

Bolín—the name is familiar to me, disagreeably familiar; Bolín, the rebel Press chief in Seville. A most uncommon name in Spain. The coincidence, if coincidence it be, increases my uneasiness. I ask the porter if he knows where Don Pedro's house is—Don Pedro is Sir Peter. He points with his revolver to the left.

"There—just next door."

"But if it's next door, then this *is* the hospital."

"This isn't a hospital. It *was* a hospital. But from to-morrow on it's Señor Bolín's house again."

So that's how things are. The man no longer trembles; he now obviously feels he has got the upper hand of me. He slams the door in my face; but while I am still standing there irresolutely, his wife comes out with a lighted candle

and leads me across the fields to Sir Peter's garden. Either this is common human kindness or else the couple are, after all, not quite so sure what the morrow may bring. In such situations even the simple-minded become diplomats.

Sir Peter is sitting at his writing desk in the light of an oil lamp, apparently oblivious of what is going on outside—a perfect Victorian idyll in the midst of the apocalyptic flood. I feel rather like a Job's comforter; moreover, quite absurdly, I feel conscience-stricken because I am late for dinner and my clothes are dirty—on the way here there was another air raid and I had to grovel among the furrows.

At dinner—two sardines, some jam, and two bottles of excellent Spanish white wine—I tried once more to persuade Sir Peter to leave the town. Looked at objectively, it was downright crazy to stay. Sir Peter had published a letter in "The Times" attacking the rebels, and had engaged in open propaganda in favour of the Spanish Government in England; while I myself, since my Seville adventure and the publication of the book that I wrote following upon it, had become one of the best-hated journalists at rebel headquarters.

"Look here, I am not going to run away," said Sir Peter in his dry fashion. "To-morrow, when the rebels come, they may possibly shoot fifty thousand people. All the consuls have gone, and there are no foreigners left. If they know that I, a "distinguished observer", am here, perhaps they'll only shoot forty thousand. And even if my presence makes no difference, I want to stay. Never yet, either in Badajoz or in Toledo, has a journalist been a witness of what happens when the rebels enter a town. I think it is worth while staying for that."

Then he tried to persuade me to leave him alone, since I was far more compromised than he.

Whereupon I tried to make him see that I could not possibly leave him alone—after all, he was a man of seventy-three and I a man of thirty-two. Despite the solemnity of the occasion, this was an argument that was not to dear Sir Peter's taste.

In the intervals of conversation we sipped Spanish white wine, and it was all rather like the last days of Pompeii.

Then we went out on to the terrace and saw in the distance beyond the dark hills a row of shining points of light, like a chain of fairy lamps at a fête, which seemed scarcely to move; they were the rebel tanks coming down the mountains from Colmenar. The sight of them sobered us a little. Sir Peter went to his room and came back with two small metal cases, that looked like Gillette razor sets. Each contained a hypodermic syringe, with a reserve needle and a tube of morphine tablets.

"Look here," said Sir Peter, "I have seen the illustrations in your book"—he meant the photographs of Franco's tortured and mutilated victims—"and I don't like the thought of it. I don't want them to get me alive."

Then he explained to me with scientific thoroughness how to use a hypodermic syringe. The tube contained sufficient tablets to enable one to escape from all the horrors of all wars, civil and otherwise.

"One must disinfect the needle over a flame, of course, before giving oneself an injection," explained Sir Peter, "or one may get an abscess."

I remarked that in the present situation an abscess more or less was of no great consequence. Sir Peter said that my remark was logically unassailable.

I went straight into the bathroom and practised giving myself subcutaneous injections. Through the window I could see the fairy lights of the tanks slowly drawing nearer, and yet I had a feeling that I was carrying out a perfectly absurd and nonsensical experiment, the sort of thing for which my father used to threaten to spank me.

Afterwards we switched over to gin and vermouth and wise and philosophic conversation. From the town isolated shots rang out, and we heard the occasional abrupt bark of a machine-gun. Our great ambition was to ignore these disturbing sounds and refuse to allow them to spoil our

'chat. There was obviously a certain element of snobbishness in our attitude, and I think Sir Peter was as aware of this as I; but we both probably felt that in our present situation a little snobbishness was excusable.

I have a profound horror of all melodrama, and that is why I dwell on these psychological details. Were every instance of so-called heroic behaviour to be examined under the microscope there would be fewer heroes and less hero-worship in the world, and I believe it would be to the world's advantage. Psychology is the *bête-noir* of dictators.

The next morning was Monday, February 8th.

We breakfasted as usual at eight o'clock. Usually the bombardment did not begin till nine—Spaniards sleep late even when making war—and we wanted at least to finish our porridge in peace.

But we were not to be allowed to. At our second mouthful three warships loomed on the horizon, outlined against that sea which lay stretched out there below the terrace, so revoltingly innocent and indolent and blue; and these warships were making full steam ahead for the harbour.

They came rapidly nearer, steering a straight course. When they were no more than a mile away, the bombardment, we knew from experience, would begin. But they did not open fire. Trailing their smoke-banners behind them, they made straight for the still Republican port of Malaga.

Could it be that at last the warships from Carthage had come to our aid? For the space of a moment we thought so; for the space of a moment believed in the possibility of a miraculous rescue at the eleventh hour; then we saw through the glasses the enemy flag, the red-yellow-red flag of the Monarchy.

Shortly after nine the cruisers steamed into the harbour of Malaga. We were still waiting for them to open fire.

But they did not fire. The coastal batteries were silent;

the guns of the cruisers were likewise silent, and their flags hung down limply from the masts. That was all.

We no longer understood what was going on. We no longer knew what was happening down below there in the silent city.

But we assiduously entered up our diaries.

Monday, February 8th, 1937 (the day on which Malaga fell).

8 a.m. During breakfast observe through glasses rebel cruisers, flying red-yellow-red Bourbon flag, entering port of Malaga. Waiting for bombardment to begin, but they don't open fire.

8.30 a.m. Eight rebel 'planes hovering above us in the sky. But they drop no bombs.

9 a.m. Usual hour for artillery bombardment to begin. But not a single detonation. Sunshine, and dead, ghostly silence.

9.30 a.m. A straggling, ragged swarm of Militiamen streams down from the Colmenar high road. Most of them no longer have rifles. All have bearded, exhausted faces, and the hopeless, furtive look of the hunted. None speaks. Some stumble. They march past the house without looking up, and vanish round the bend in the road.

10 a.m. An isolated straggler—a wounded Militiaman, unarmed, trembling and half dead, passes by the house and asks for water and cigarettes. As I give him a light, I can see his hands and feet trembling.

"Is the road to the town still open?" he asks.

"Yes, still open."

"They won't kill me?"

"They won't kill you."

"Are you sure they won't kill me?"

"I am sure they won't kill you."

"God bless you, Señor."

And he staggers on.

(I wonder whether they did kill him.)

11 a.m. Rebel cruisers and 'planes continue to disport themselves in the waters and in the air of still Republican Malaga.

Sir Peter and I decide to go into the town to find out what is happening.

Immediately we leave the house an invisible machine-gun begins to bark in the neighbourhood. The road is under fire. We walk back.

12 a.m. A refugee family enters the garden—a man and wife, two children, and a mother-in-law, with a vast array of baskets and packages, chiefly containing bedding. There is a touching conventionality about the way in which in all great catastrophes—fires, floods, wars—the poor and wretched rescue their bedding before everything else. Next in the hierarchy of earthly treasures come pots and pans and household crockery. This order of selection of the goods they consider worth saving is perhaps the starkest and most shameless revelation of the permanent misery of the masses of this world. Third on the list comes usually the cage with the canary, the pet cat, or a preposterous mongrel dog; they stand for the sunny side of existence.

The family take up their quarters in the garden. We greet them in our usual way, with clenched fist—the usual greeting in Republican Spain—but they keep their hands still and smile sheepishly. We ask them where the rebels are, and the woman says in a whisper, and with a sly wink:

"The National troops are everywhere in the hills—here—there." And she lays a finger on her lips as though there were Moors hiding behind the bushes.

We ask her what things look like in the town, and she replies, still whispering, and with the same sly wink:

"Ever since this morning there has been a white flag on the Civil Governor's Residence."

So it is all over. Malaga has surrendered.

And I remember Colonel Villalba's last statement before

he stepped into his car: "The situation is a critical one, but Malaga will put up a good fight."

Malaga did not put up a good fight.

The city was betrayed by its leaders—deserted, delivered up to the slaughter. The rebel cruisers bombarded us and the ships of the Republic did not come. The rebel 'planes sowed panic and destruction, and the 'planes of the Republic did not come. The rebels had artillery, armoured cars and tanks, and the arms and war material of the Republic did not come. The rebels advanced from all directions and the bridge on the only road connecting Malaga with the Republic had been broken for four months. The rebels maintained an iron discipline and machine-gunned their troops into battle, while the defenders of Malaga had no discipline, no leaders, and no certainty that the Republic was backing them up. Italians, Moors and Foreign Legionaries fought with the professional bravery of mercenaries against the people in a cause that was not theirs; and the soldiers of the people, who were fighting for a cause that was their own, turned tail and ran away.

It would be far too glib to explain away the catastrophes of Badajoz, Toledo and Malaga simply by pointing to the enemy's superiority in war material. Nor does the fact of the treachery and desertion of the local leaders of Malaga alone suffice as an explanation. The city was in the charge of men who proved incompetent—yet no less great is the responsibility of the Central Government of Valencia, which sent neither ships nor 'planes nor war material to Malaga, and did not have the sense to replace incompetent leaders by good ones. With Malaga Largo Caballero's Government completed the chapter of their mistakes and errors of judgment; they had to go. But a whole string of those who bear the responsibility for the unfortunate course of the Civil War up till now (I am writing these lines in September, 1937) still remain. This is one of those things that fills the friends of Spanish democracy with the gravest concern.

The longer one waits for a thing to happen, the more astonished one is when it finally does happen. We had known for days that Malaga was lost, but we had pictured the end quite differently. Everything had proceeded so terribly silently, noiselessly, undramatically. Events had shown every sign of coming to a head, but we were cheated of the climax. In all secrecy the white flag had been hoisted on the Malaga tower. When, on the morrow, the enemy's cruisers and 'planes arrived, we expected them to open fire, and did not realize that there was no longer an enemy, that we were already living under the domination of the Bourbon flag.

This smooth, slick transition was much more terrifying than anything we had feared. Without our knowing it, while we slept, we had been delivered up to the tender mercies of General Franco.

The entry of the rebel troops likewise took place in a breathtakingly natural and undramatic fashion. My diary runs:

1 p.m. An officer wearing the grey steel helmet of the Italian army appears on the road leading to Colmenar, just opposite our house.

He looks round and fires a revolver shot into the air. Immediately after this about two hundred infantry come marching down the road in perfect formation. They are singing Mussolini's hymn, "Giovinezza".

As they pass by the house they salute us, and the household staff, who only yesterday assiduously raised their clenched fists, now, with equal Spanish effusiveness, raise their arms in the Fascist salute. They seem perfectly at ease, but since they look upon us foreigners as half imbecile, the gardener advises Sir Peter and me to change our demeanour, too, "because we have a new Government now". It is both tragi-comic and humiliating.

After some time, as more and more troops go by and

salute us—we are all gathered on the balcony as though reviewing a march past—Sir Peter and I are constrained to raise our arms, too. We avoid looking at each other.

I drink a tumbler full of cognac.

2 p.m. A company of Italian infantry occupies the neighbouring hill.

3 p.m. The Italian lieutenant in command of the company on the hill comes into the garden and asks whether he may wash. He introduces himself courteously, and Sir Peter gives orders for a bath to be got ready for him. A few soldiers follow him down from the hill to get a wash and a drink of water. They do not speak a word of Spanish. They look pretty worn-out; their behaviour is perfectly polite.

4 p.m. A storm of hurrahs and clapping is heard coming from the city. The rebels have reached the centre of Malaga.

4.30 p.m. Cars flying the Bourbon flag come driving along the road. Tanks are lumbering down in an endless column from Colmenar. Shots can be heard from the town at regular intervals. One of the household staff volunteers the suggestion that, since the fighting is over, these shots may mean "that the execution of the Red criminals is beginning".

I burn some compromising papers: letters of introduction from the Spanish Embassy and from well-known politicians in Valencia.

It is all up now. We are at the mercy of Queipo de Llano. Unfortunately I know him of old.

Once more it was evening, and once more we sat opposite one another on high-backed Victorian armchairs at the formally laid table and ate grilled sardines. The rebels had occupied the town and we had seen nothing of it all, and nothing had happened to us.

They might come for us at any moment now—it was most likely that they would come at night—but we did not really believe it. In the morning, when I had given the trembling

Militiaman his cigarette, I had still had one last impulse to flee. I had half resolved to fetch my typewriter and papers from the house and join the Militiamen. And it was mainly out of indolence that I had not done so. Down below in the town all was chaos and uncertainty, and the garden here basked so peacefully in the sun—it seemed highly improbable that things of a disorderly nature could ever happen in this neat and well-kept garden.

I was reminded of a scene from a play about the French Revolution by a German writer of the last century. Danton learns that Robespierre is going to have him arrested on the following day, and he flees from his house at night. He wanders blindly across the dark heath. It is cold and windy and suddenly he has a feeling that it is highly illogical to be wandering at night over a windy heath instead of sleeping at home in his good bed. Robespierre and the Convention seem to him unreal figments of the imagination, and the only common-sense thing to do seems to be to go home to bed and sleep. This he does. "Even should we know in theory," is the substance of his reflections, "even should we know in theory of all the dangers that threaten us, deep down in us there is a smiling voice which tells us that the morrow will be just as yesterday." The next morning he is arrested.

Deep down in us, too, on this last evening was that smiling voice that told us that the morrow would be just as yesterday.

The next morning at 11 a.m. we were arrested.

I must for one last time break into my story to go back to the past; for it is a very complicated story, full of the most improbable coincidences. It is a commonplace that landscapes are frequently more tawdry than picture postcards, and life more melodramatic than the films.

In our tragedy of errors the two Dromios were played by Captain and Señor Bolín. They were not twins, but cousins.

Captain Bolín was, as I have said, the Press chief at the Burgos Headquarters to whom I was denounced in Seville. Fellow journalists from Spain told me months later that Bolín was in a towering rage with me, and had sworn "to shoot K. like a mad dog if he ever got hold of him".

It was this very Captain Bolín who did get hold of me in Malaga.

During the six months that had elapsed since we met in Seville, Captain Bolín had acquired a certain reputation amongst the international Press correspondents in Spain. I do not know whether he was responsible for the execution of Guy de Traversé, correspondent of "l'Intransigeant" in rebel Majorca, but I know that it was he who arrested in Seville, amongst others, René Brue, the Pathé Gazette camera-man, because he suspected him of filming the Badajoz massacres. Brue was taken to Seville prison, and there Captain Bolín visited him in his cell and threatened to shoot him on the spot if he persisted in his denials. Brue very wisely did persist in his denials, and the Pathé Gazette sent an aeroplane to Seville with a copy of the film, having first carefully cut out 900 feet of the Badajoz part of it. Brue was saved, and so was S. of the "Chicago Tribune", whom Captain Bolín ordered to be shot, having confused him with Taylor, Chairman of the Anglo-American Press Association in Paris, with whom I shared the honour of figuring at the head of the Burgos Press Department's black-list. And, last but not least, it was Captain Bolín who expelled a number of Conservative and Francophile British Press correspondents from rebel territory for the astounding reason that their newspapers referred to the insurgents as "insurgents" and not as "the National Army", a designation which, with an excess of delicacy and fine feelings, the rebels have conferred upon themselves.

That is Act One.

Act Two. There was, as we know, a house and garden adjoining Sir Peter's house and garden. And the owner's

name was Bolín. As I have said, Bolín is a somewhat rare name in Spain. I was puzzled by the coincidence, and I asked Sir Peter about his neighbour. This is the story which Sir Peter told me the night before our arrest.

Señor Bolín—we will call him this in order to distinguish him from his cousin, Captain Bolín—was a member of the *Falange Española*. On the July 18th, 1936, the Generals launched their insurrection throughout Spain. In Malaga, as in Madrid and Barcelona, the rebels, after fierce street fighting, were defeated; the Republicans remained in control of the city, and Señor Bolín came to the house of his neighbour, Sir Peter, whom he knew to be a "Red", to ask for shelter and protection.

He arrived with his wife, mother-in-law, five or six children and two or three maids. Sir Peter installed the whole Bolín tribe in his house—it was packed from attic to cellar. Señor Bolín handed over certain documents for safe keeping in an envelope which Sir Peter locked away in a drawer of his writing-desk.

The next day an Anarchist patrol visited the house.

They did not wish to trouble Sir Peter, knowing his sympathetic attitude towards the Republican Government, but they demanded to see the documents of the Señor living upstairs.

Sir Peter was obliged to hand over the documents. The Anarchist leader, a young lad, opened the envelope. The first thing he found was Señor Bolín's Phalangist membership card, the second a set of pornographic pictures such as are posted to amateurs by certain bookshops in Paris. The Anarchist seemed highly delighted with both discoveries. Then Sir Peter had one of his usual happy inspirations.

"Look here," he said in his smoothest tones, "we'll strike a bargain: you keep the pictures, and I'll keep the card."

The Anarchist, who, as I have said, was very young, was at first indignant, then amused, and finally, out of friendliness towards Sir Peter, he consented.

Some days later, nevertheless, Señor Bolín was arrested. But Sir Peter secured his release, obtained passports for his family, and finally, at the peril of his own life, smuggled Bolín out of Malaga to Gibraltar.

Bolín's luggage remained in Sir Peter's house; his own house was converted into a military hospital.

At 11 a.m. on Tuesday, February 9th, twenty-four hours after the rebels entered Malaga, we were arrested.

At 10.30 I was standing on the roof, our usual observation post, counting the lorries full of Italian troops which were still driving down from the mountains in an endless column. The Italians looked fresh and well-fed. Their faultless equipment, from steel helmet to puttees, provided a striking contrast to the ragged, wretched garb of the Republican Militiamen. As their radiant, good-humoured faces, the happy faces of victors, appeared, one after another, in the field of vision of my glasses, I was conscious in myself of the bitter feelings of the poor man in the fable who is invited to dine at the rich man's table.

Then I saw an elegant private car decorated with the Bourbon flag driving up the road to Señor Bolín's house. I told Sir Peter of this.

"Perhaps it is Bolín coming back," he said. "It is his turn now to protect *us*." And he walked over to the next door house.

As a matter of fact we both allowed ourselves to some extent to hope that the man whose life Sir Peter had saved would, now that the situation was reversed, show his gratitude. That he should be the cousin of the very officer from whom I had most to fear seemed to me to be an extraordinarily lucky coincidence. There are many such touching stories of noble-spirited men on opposite sides of the trenches in the Great War saving each other's lives; and perhaps there is no illusion which one sheds with greater difficulty than that of "fair play".

Ten minutes after Sir Peter had left the house he returned, pale and upset.

"It *was* Bolín," he said. "He's just come back by car from Gibraltar."

"Has he got any more dirty postcards?"

"No, but he's wearing the red beret of the *Requetes*, and has a huge army revolver. He says it will give him great pleasure to hunt down the Reds and kill a few of them with his own hands."

Sir Peter goes upstairs to get Señor Bolín's belongings together for him.

I am left alone in the garden. Once more I feel in urgent need of a brandy, and I go into the library to get one.

The library has three doors. While I am looking for the brandy, the three doors open simultaneously, almost noiselessly, and three officers, revolvers in their hands, enter. Two of them are unknown to me. All I notice is that they are wearing brand-new uniforms.

The third is Captain Bolín.

What follows happens very quickly, just as in a speeded-up film. The syringe is in my pocket; all I require is to be left alone for two or three minutes. Acting quite automatically, I try to slip upstairs. I get no farther than the third stair when a stentorian voice calls me back.

"Hands up!"

I raise both hands above my head.

"Come down."

I step down backwards.

Three revolvers are pointed at me, one from each side, a third from the rear.

It is all like a dream. I am only half conscious of what is happening.

Captain Bolín calls the gardener.

"A rope."

And the gardener goes off to fetch one.

Sir Peter comes down the staircase with Señor Bolín's suitcase.

"Hands up!"

He puts his hands up. But he stands erect.

There is silence for a few seconds.

Then a fourth individual, with a red cap, enters the room. I recognize him at once by his resemblance to his cousin; it is Señor Bolín. He stands looking on at the pleasant little scene with a grin on his face.

"Sir Peter," I ask, "is this the man whose life you saved?"

"Shut up!" says Captain Bolín.

Señor Bolín grins.

The gardener comes back. He has been unable to find a rope, but has brought two yards of electric wiring.

"I believe they're going to hang me," I say to Sir Peter.

As I say this, it occurs to me that the final agony will be certain to last longer with this inflexible wire than it would with an ordinary rope.

"Shut up!" says Bolín. And he makes a sign to one of the two officers who are with him.

The officer—a handsome young man who looks rather shy and seems to be quite a nice fellow—takes the wire and plants himself behind me. He twists my hands behind my back and tries to bind them with the wire. But the wire is too stiff. He walks round me, pulls my hands round to the front as though manipulating a wooden doll, and once more tries to bind them. All this time Bolín is pressing a revolver into my right side, the third officer a revolver into my left. This latter is a fat, bald-headed fellow with incredibly bestial features. During the whole proceeding he has a grin on his face and literally snorts with pleasure. He snorts through his nose as though he has asthma; I can feel his breath on my ear. Up till now I have only come across such sadistic types in political cartoons, and have never really believed that they actually exist. The fellow grins, and snorts

and snorts. He is obviously a pathological sex case. My physical disgust is almost stronger than my fear.

Then, to my own astonishment, I hear myself saying:

"Look here, Bolín, if you're going to shoot me, take me upstairs; don't do it in Sir Peter's presence."

"Shut up!" says Bolín; but all the same I detect a certain astonishment on his features.

Later on I often wondered—I had plenty of time in prison to ponder such questions—whether these words of mine, which may have saved my life, were prompted by consideration for Sir Peter or merely by the desire to gain time. Perhaps it was a mixture of both motives; but I rather think the second predominated.

The next thing I remember is Sir Peter reasoning with Señor Bolín. He was asking if he could have five minutes' conversation with him in the next room. Señor Bolín smiled a smile of bland refusal, but in the end he gave in. The two of them went into the next room. Captain Bolín supervised the complicated procedure of the binding of my hands, and then joined them.

The three had a short palaver in the next room. It was obvious that Sir Peter was pleading for me, but just as obvious that he was not having much success.

I was not allowed to go near them.

"What's happening?" I shouted through the open door.

They came out, and Sir Peter said very quietly and with a tender look, "It seems that it is all right for me, but not for you."

Anyhow, they did not shoot me there and then.

To this day I do not know what made Captain Bolín change his mind; whether my words had made him conscious of the responsibility he would be taking upon himself if he were to shoot a foreign journalist in a house flying the Union Jack, or whether the gentleman with the red beret and the filthy pictures had after all brought himself to the point of intervening.

Hr

It is an elevating thought that one should owe one's life to a set of dirty postcards.

They took us out to a car. My hands were bound, Sir Peter's were not. As we passed the troops the other side of the hill it seemed as though they had half a mind to lynch us; but Captain Bolín persuaded them that this would not be a nice thing to do.

We were taken to the police station. Captain Bolín and the fat officer got out, while we were made to wait in the car with the younger officer.

We waited for two hours. The sun was shining and it was extremely hot. I can't remember what we talked about, and I dare say most of it was nonsense; everything one says is nonsense when one is facing the imminent reality of being shot.

The whole time I could see in my mind's eye the pictures in my book of people being tortured. I asked Sir Peter in English whether, as we had agreed, he had destroyed the autographed copy of the book which I had given him. He said that he hadn't been able to bring himself to do so. This was bad; if, while searching the house, they were to find the book with all its terrible photographs, they would be bound to be more than ever incensed at me.

"The only thing I am afraid of is being tortured," I said to Sir Peter.

"I don't think they'll torture you," said Sir Peter; and then he recited to me those lines of Swinburne which he knew I was very fond of, and which appear on the flyleaf of his recently published memoirs.

*"Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,
And full of ease and kingdom; seeing in death
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn
Nor light upon the land whither I go.*

*Live thou and take thy fill of days and die
When thy day comes; and make not much of death
Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing."*

I realized that he meant this as a kind of prayer for the dead, a sort of last Sacrament.

Then we were separated.

Bolín and the fat officer came back and took Sir Peter away with them. I did not think I should ever see him again.

As for me, the first thing they did was to photograph me in the street, first full face, then in profile. A crowd stood about, cracking the usual jokes. It was confoundedly humiliating, but Sir Peter's tender voice still echoed in my ears:

*". . . and die
When thy day comes; and make not much of death."*

These peaceful lines were very comforting, and gave me a feeling of superiority, almost of contemptuous arrogance. Then they took me into the police station.

While we were crossing the forecourt an officer of the Phalanx prodded me on the chest. "*Ruso, Ruso*—a Russian, a Russian!" he shouted. I said that I was not a Russian, but he wouldn't listen to me.

"To-night you'll be flying off to your Moscow Hell," he said with a leer.

I was led into a vast empty room. In the corner of the room was a stool, upon which I was made to sit down. Two Civil Guards sat down opposite me near the door, their rifles on their knees.

We sat like this for a while.

Then I heard screams coming from the courtyard, and a young man, his naked torso streaming with blood, was led into the room. His face was battered, cut about and

slashed; for a moment I thought the man must have been run over by a steam engine. Holding him by the armpits they dragged him across the room. He yelled and whimpered. The Phalangists who were dragging him along spoke to him in honeyed tones: "*Hombre*, we're not going to beat you any more." The door closed after them, and a moment later there were sounds of ringing blows and dull thuds and kicks. The man groaned and cried by turns. He cried at regular intervals, neither like a man nor an animal, but as a child cries—a child with an unnatural, deep bass voice. Then for a few seconds there was silence. All I could hear was quick, stertorous breathing. I don't know what they did to him in those few seconds. Then he screamed again in an unnaturally high-pitched shrill voice; and then at last he was silent.

A few moments later the door flew open and they dragged him across the room in which I was sitting into the courtyard. I couldn't make out whether he was dead or merely unconscious. I did not care to look very closely.

Then a second victim was taken through the room to be subjected to the same treatment; and then a third.

Every time they went through the room the Phalangists looked at me as though marking me down as their next victim, but they said nothing. After the third victim, no more were brought in; I sat still and waited.

The Civil Guards sitting opposite me seemed to be disagreeably affected by these proceedings. While the tortures were going on in the next room they scrutinized my features keenly to watch my reaction, perhaps, too, with a faint stirring of pity. When the third victim was brought back, most probably dead, the elder of the Civil guards shrugged his shoulders with a glance in my direction; it was an unconscious gesture of apology. In it was expressed the whole attitude towards life of a fifty-year-old gendarme who, on the one hand, had thirty years of service in a medieval country behind him and on the other probably had a wife,

several underfed children and a pet canary. In it was expressed an entire human philosophy of shame, resignation and apathy. "The world's like that," he seemed to be saying, "and neither I nor you will ever change it." Situations of this kind burn themselves into the mind and the shrug of the Civil Guard is more vivid in my memory than the screams of the tortured.

I sat on the stool in the corner of the room for a very long time—for several hours, in fact; maybe two, maybe three or four. It took me half an hour to summon up the courage to get up and pace up and down. At first the Civil Guards growled at me and I sat down again; but after another half an hour or so I got up again, and this time they raised no objection. They smoked and chatted. I had a definite purpose in mind, and pursued it with the patience and obstinacy of an old lag; it is astonishing how quickly one picks up such things. My idea was, while pacing up and down, surreptitiously to take the hypodermic syringe, the two needles and the tube with the morphine tablets out of their case and to secrete them in various parts of my clothing. Slowly and patiently I succeeded in doing this; I slipped the syringe into my packet of cigarettes, the needles into the inner lining of my coat, the tube into my breast-pocket handkerchief. At this point I asked to be taken to the lavatory; I needed some water to dissolve the tablets.

After a short consultation they acquiesced. They allowed me to close the door but not to bolt it. It was a real Spanish lavatory; there was no tap, but only a wretched puddle on the flagstones. I began to fill the syringe from it, but such a wave of disgust came over me that I stopped and came out again. That disgust could be stronger than fear, than the stark, brute fear which I had felt during the torturing of the other victims, was another experience that I could not have theoretically foreseen.

It was dark by the time Captain Bolín and his fat friend came back.

They took me out into the courtyard, and Captain Bolín gave orders for me to be thoroughly searched.

Two soldiers set about this task. First of all my pockets were emptied. The fat officer went through my pocket-book. I had burned any papers that might be compromising, and my pocket-book now contained only a few personal documents, some money, and two telegrams from the Foreign Editor of the "News Chronicle" on technical matters, asking me, amongst other things, to send all photographs by air-mail.

"What kind of photographs does he mean?" asked the fat officer.

"Why, Press photographs," I said in astonishment.

"Since when has it been the practice to send Press photographs by air-mail?" he asked scornfully. Like so many officers, he obviously had an espionage complex; and mistrust combined with stupidity and malevolence are about as dangerous a mixture of qualities as you can find in a man. I realized that it was hopeless to argue with him, and merely shrugged my shoulders—and even that, for safety's sake, only in imagination.

Then happened what was only to be expected.

The soldier who was feeling the lining of my coat let out a terrified yell and clapped his thumb to his lips; he had pricked it on the hypodermic needle.

"He's got something sharp hidden in the lining," he said, sucking in rage and fright at his thumb.

I pulled out the needle and held it up in the half light of the courtyard.

"What is that?" shouted the fat officer, recoiling several paces. Bolín, too, stepped back. They were all convinced that they were at last confronted in real life with the famous needle containing Indian snake venom which they knew so well from the films and detective stories. It was a positively awesome moment.

I was made to deposit the needle on a plate, for they all

refused to touch it. Then they examined my cigarette packet, and discovered the syringe. Then they shook out my handkerchief and discovered the tablets, and finally I myself voluntarily produced the second needle from the lining of my coat. I was obviously the most dangerous individual that had ever trodden Spanish soil—Mata Hari and Madame X were only wretched amateurs in comparison. Bolín counted over my loose cash; then he made me sign a receipt which ran:

"This is to confirm that I had 700 French francs and 150 pesetas on my person at the time of my arrest."

He put the receipt in his pocket. The meaning of this proceeding was perfectly obvious. Bolín wanted to obtain from me a sort of testimonial to the businesslike correctitude of his behaviour.

I had on me, in addition, a few small Catalan banknotes, which are of no real value in rebel territory.

"You can keep those," he said, "they'll do to pay your fare when you set out on your journey to Heaven to-night."

I asked them to leave me my fountain-pen.

"You won't need that in Heaven," he said, and handed it over to his fat friend, who tested the mechanism with obvious satisfaction. The pen was a present from my wife. I don't set over-great store by symbols, but the thought that my old pen, which I had used to write my first book on Spain, should fall as booty into the hands of a rebel officer was particularly galling to me.

When they had finished searching me, all that I had left was my wrist-watch, which they had fortunately overlooked.

I was taken back to the now dark room.

Again hours went by. I paced up and down, the rifles of the Civil Guards before my eyes, with a feeling of utter hopelessness. I had eaten nothing since breakfast, but didn't feel hungry. About 10 p.m. a non-commissioned officer came and

ordered me to be put into a lorry. Five men took their places behind me, their rifles on their knees, and the lorry drove off.

I was convinced that I was going to my execution. The streets of fallen Malaga were as dark as before. Soldiers were camped everywhere: Moors with their grubby green turbans, Phalangists and Foreign Legionaries. But no Italians were to be seen in the town; the rebel leaders obviously attached no importance to parading the national liberators before the eyes of the civilian population. In any case the civilian population apparently preferred to celebrate their liberation behind closed shutters.

The passage of our tumbril evoked the usual derisive jeers from the soldiers. I tried to discover in what part of the town we were—I assumed that the execution, as is customary, would take place in the cemetery—and puffed away furiously at the last but one of my English cigarettes. At this moment I felt neither excessive fear nor any other feeling except a wish that the whole thing might be over as quickly as possible and without further torture. I calculated that they could not possibly aim straight in the dark, and that they would therefore place me in front of the lorry's headlights or finish me off with a revolver shot as I alighted. This latter seemed to me an ideal way of dying; but out of superstition I did not dare to hope for it.

Finally I summoned up enough courage to ask a soldier. He said in quite matter-of-fact tones that I was not going to be shot yet, but taken to prison. Then he took a light from my cigarette and said to the man behind him:

"This fellow thought he was going to be shot at once."

"Rot," replied the man, whose face I could not see, over his shoulder in a good-humoured booming bass. "Rot. It's not such a quick business as all that, *hombre*."

Spaniards use *hombre*—man—in every sentence.

It was an immense relief, and at the same time a disappointment; waiting is always a torment for nervy people, and waiting without hope is the most ghastly thing possible.

We drove up to the prison, and the driver rang the night bell. That a prison should have a night bell is quite logical, but somehow it seemed odd to me. The great iron door opened, and we marched down a long, ill-lit corridor into the office. I was searched all over again, and made to strip down to my underclothes. One official tapped the soles of my shoes with an iron hammer, another passed his hands through my hair. Having an aversion to sock-suspenders, I always wear golf stockings, and the official asked me whether I had ever disguised myself as a woman. Once again I had to grin in spite of my despair.

"*Lleva calcetines de mujer*," (wears women's stockings), wrote the official in my record. As he was doing so, I managed to catch a glimpse of the record that had been made out by Captain Bolin and was lying on the table in front of the official. I read that I was a very dangerous character—I presume that was because of the hypodermic needle—that I should be most carefully guarded and kept *incomunicado*—that is to say, isolated; and that I was a *caso internacional*—an international case—or spy.

And now, to crown all, came the "women's stockings". The chain of evidence was complete.

Finally my finger-prints were taken, and I was allowed to put all my clothes on again with the exception of my belt, which was kept in the office.

Then I was taken to a cell.

For the first time I heard the sound of a cell door being slammed from outside.

It is a unique sound. A cell door has no latch, either outside or inside; it cannot be shut except by being slammed to. It is made of massive steel and concrete, about four inches thick, and every time it falls to there is a resounding

crash just as though a shot has been fired. But this report dies away without an echo. Prison sounds are echo-less and bleak. When the door has been slammed behind him for the first time, the prisoner stands in the middle of the cell and looks round. I fancy that everyone must behave in more or less the same way.

First of all he gives a fleeting look round the walls and takes a mental inventory of all the objects in what is now to be his domain:

the iron bedstead,
the wash-basin,
the W.C.,
the barred window.

His next action is invariably to try to pull himself up by the iron bars of the window and look out. He fails, and his suit is covered with white from the plaster on the wall against which he has pressed himself. He desists, but decides to practise and master the art of pulling himself up by his hands. Indeed, he makes all sorts of good resolutions; he will do exercises every morning and learn a foreign language, and he simply won't let his spirit be broken. He dusts his suit and continues his voyage of exploration round his puny realm—five paces long by four paces broad. He tries the iron bedstead. The springs are broken, the wire mattress sags and cuts into the flesh; it's like lying in a hammock made of steel wire. He sits up. He pulls a face, being absolutely determined to prove that he is full of courage and confidence. Then his gaze rests on the cell door, and he sees that an eye is glued to the spy-hole and is watching him.

The eye goggles at him glassily, its pupil unbelievably big; it is an eye without a man attached to it, and for a few moments the prisoner's heart stops beating.

The eye disappears and the prisoner takes a deep breath and presses his hand against the left side of his chest.

"Well," he says to himself encouragingly, "how silly to

go and get so frightened. You must get used to that; after all, the official's only doing his duty by peeping in; that's part of being in prison. But they won't get me down, they'll never get me down; I'll stuff paper in the spy-hole at night. . . ."

As a matter of fact there's no reason why he shouldn't do so straight away. The idea fills him with genuine enthusiasm. For the first time he experiences that almost manic desire for activity that from now on will alternate continually—up and down in a never-ending zig-zag—with melancholia and depression.

Then he realizes that he has no paper on him, and his next impulse is—according to his social status—either to ring or to run over to the stationer's at the corner. This impulse lasts only the fraction of a second; the next moment he becomes conscious for the first time of the true significance of his situation. For the first time he grasps the full reality of being behind a door which is locked from outside, grasps it in all its searing, devastating poignancy.

This, too, lasts only a few seconds. The next moment that psychological mechanism which blunts our senses gets going again, and induces that merciful state of semi-narcosis induced by pacing up and down, forging plans, spinning illusions.

"Let us see," says the novice, "where were we? Ah, yes, that business of stuffing paper in the spy-hole. It *must* be possible to get hold of paper somehow or other." He leaves the "how" in this "somehow" out of his calculations. This is a mode of thought that he will soon master—or it will master him. "When I get out," he will say for example, "I shall never worry about money again. I shall rub along somehow or other." Or: "When I get out, I shall never quarrel with the wife again. We'll manage to get along somehow."

Indeed, somehow or other everything will be all right once he's free.

The fact that the prisoner follows this stereotyped line of thought, which, as I say, is going, after a few days, completely

to master him, means that the outside world increasingly loses its significance for him; it becomes a dream world in which everything is somehow or other possible.

"Where were we? . . . Oh, yes, that business of stuffing paper in the spy-hole. Of course, somehow or other one can get hold of some paper. But is it allowed? No, it's certain not to be allowed. Ah, well. . . ."

"Let's take a more thorough inventory of the objects in the room. Why, look, there's an iron table with a chair which we haven't really observed or fully appreciated yet. Of course the chair can't be moved from the table; it's welded to it. A pity, otherwise one might use it as a bed table and put one's things on it when getting undressed—pocket-book, handkerchief, cigarettes, matches and so on. . . ."

Then it occurs to him that he has neither pocket-book nor handkerchief, cigarettes nor matches in his pocket.

The barometer of his mood falls a second time.

It rises again the moment he has tried the tap over the wash-basin. "Look, there's running water in prison—it isn't half as bad as one imagined from outside. After all, there is a bed (and it's much healthier to sleep on a hard bed), a wash-basin, a table, a chair—what more can a man want? One must learn to live simply and unassumingly: a few exercises, reading, writing, learning a foreign language. . . ."

"After all, how did people live a few centuries ago? Surely it's possible to get on without the superfluous frills of modern life; one's only got to adapt oneself."

(Follows a lengthy monologue on Rousseau and "getting back to Nature.")

The next voyage of discovery is in the direction of the water closet. "Why, there's even one of these—it's really not half so bad." He pulls the plug. The chain refuses to function.

And the barometer falls afresh.

It rises again once the subtle plan has been conceived of filling the bucket with water from the tap and of flushing the lavatory pan in this way. It falls again when it transpires that

the tap has also ceased to function. It rises again when he reflects that there must be certain times of the day when the water runs. It falls—it rises—it falls—it rises. And this is how things are to go on—in the coming minutes, hours, days, weeks, years.

How long has he been in the cell?

He looks at his watch: exactly three minutes.

And it seems to him that it is an eternity since the door banged to behind him.

I said that I am convinced that the vast majority of prisoners behave in this or some such way during the first few moments of their imprisonment. The more drastic a situation, the more stereotyped the way in which people react to it. Whenever life is at its most dramatic, it is least able to escape the commonplace. In our moments of greatest excitement, at the so-called great moments of life, we all behave like characters in a penny novelette. The virtue of the word lies in the sphere of abstractions. Language pales before the concrete and tangible.

It becomes a completely useless instrument when it is a question of describing such horribly ordinary and naked facts as the fear of a human being in the face of death.

I had hardly been five minutes in the cell when there was a rattling in the lock and the door was thrown open.

Outside stood the two officials I had already met, the one who had searched me and the one who had entered the bit about the "women's stockings" in my record.

"Venga," they said. "Come."

I did not dare to ask where.

Once more we marched down the long, bare corridors, past an endless row of closed cell doors.

To every spy-hole on each side of the corridor a goggling eye was glued.

We passed through a double file of eyes—of wide-open, staring eyes, of eyes without people attached to them.

The warder who had searched me was in radiant mood. He stretched out his hand in the direction of this and that cell, giving a downward sweep with his index finger.

"Bang, bang," he said. "Reds, Reds, the whole lot of 'em. All dead to-morrow."

"We're walking down an avenue of dead eyes," it occurred to me, and I felt my knees give beneath me as I walked.

The eyes stared. Behind each hole was a pupil.

"You dead to-morrow, too," said the warder.

I had a feeling that my knees were nothing but flabby jelly. "The condemned man walked with an uncertain gait." All condemned men walk with an uncertain gait. Damn those penny novelettes!

At the end of the corridor was an iron grille. The officials turned a lock and threw the grille back. Behind it was a shorter corridor with a few cells: the isolation cells.

One of the cell doors was unlocked: I was given a thump in the back and hurled in.

And once more the door slammed to behind me.

The fixtures were exactly the same, only the barred window was smaller and placed somewhat higher up. The wall above the iron bedstead was spattered with blood. It must have been fresh blood, for it still smelt slightly sour. I smelt it.

I felt utterly wretched. I lay down on the wire mattress. There was no straw palliase and no blanket. It was bitterly cold. I was freezing, the iron network cut into all my limbs, and I could not escape from the sour smell. The W.C. was stopped up, and the tap did not function. Through the window I could hear isolated shots, then a salvo, then shots again, and in between, cries. I had to vomit. I lay on the bed and was nothing but a bundle of misery. "You're nothing but a bundle of misery," I thought, and could not help grinning.

Curiously enough I fell asleep at once, and slept soundly and peacefully until dawn.

When I awoke I did not know, of course, where I was, and when I remembered I did not feel any the better for the knowledge. A few grimy rays of light filtered through the grimy barred window. Utter, bleak silence reigned. It is only in prisons that the air is so deaf.

It always requires resolution to get up in the morning. This morning there was nothing to get up for, nothing to make it worth while. No work awaited me, no post, no duties. For the first time I experienced that curious feeling of freedom and irresponsibility which is one of the will-o'-the-wisp-like illusions of prison psychosis. I turned over on to the other side on my wire mattress, pulled my legs up to my stomach to keep myself warm, and felt like a schoolboy playing truant. Then I dozed off again.

When I awoke, the light was still uncertain; a sound had awakened me. I listened; someone was singing. It sounded fairly near. The man who was singing must be in one of the isolation cells opposite. I sat up and felt my heart stand still. The man was singing the "International".

He was singing it all out of tune in a hoarse voice. He was obviously waiting for the other condemned prisoners to join in. But no one joined in. He sang all alone in his cell, in the prison, and in the night.

I had read several novels and books describing German prisons and concentration camps. The singing of the "International" as a political protest or as a last demonstration is frequently mentioned in them; but despite my profound respect for the German martyrs, such passages had always struck me as a little melodramatic and improbable. Now I myself was hearing a man who knew that he was going to die singing the "International". It was completely unmelodramatic; the hoarse, unmelodious voice sounded ineffably wretched and pitiable, unspeakably touching and awe-inspiring. Getting up, I posted myself by the door and stood to attention with my fist raised solemnly in the salute I had learned at meetings in Valencia

and Madrid. And I was absolutely convinced that in all the adjoining cells my fellow-prisoners were also standing to attention in the night and silently and solemnly raising their fists. At that moment I had no temptation to indulge in self-mockery, but only a rapturous feeling of brotherly love and oneness with the others.

We loved the singer and embraced him in imagination, and many of us would have been ready fearlessly to give our own lives to save him.

But no one joined in the singing—out of fear.

II

THE FIRST DAY in prison began; the first of one hundred and two days.

There was no breakfast, no water for washing, no comb to comb my hair with. There was nothing to do but wait. I paced up and down, six and a half paces up, six and a half paces down, trying hard to think of pleasant things and to be an amusing companion to myself. The first thing that occurred to me, oddly enough, was a quotation from one of Edgar Wallace's African yarns:

“. . . We've only got to die once. Personally speakin' that never cheered me up. If you died more than once you'd get used to it, old Ham. Do you see my meanin'? That's philosophy."

That *was* philosophy, I thought. And I was surprised to find how difficult it was to think of cheerful things, indeed, to control the direction of one's imagination at all. One stands at the helm of one's thoughts, and the more troubled the sea, the more difficult the steering. If one lets go only for a second, the helm slews round on its own.

I took a piece of wire out of the bedstead and began to

scrawl mathematical formulae on the wall. I worked out the equation of an ellipse; but I couldn't manage the equation of a hyperbola. The formulæ became so long that they reached from the W.C. to the wash-basin. I gave it up and looked at my watch. It was one o'clock. Only then did I realize how hungry I was; I had eaten nothing for twenty-nine hours.

I flew into a rage and began to hammer on the cell door; at first with my fists, then, taking off a shoe, with that. I had seen a man do this in an American film. Unfortunately my shoes were rubber-soled.

Nothing stirred. My rage evaporated, and once more I grew apathetic. I pressed an eye to the spy-hole and peered out into the corridor. I could only see a small section of it; my field of vision was just large enough to take in the door immediately opposite. But after a while I made an exciting discovery; the spy-hole opposite mine kept lighting up and growing dark again at regular intervals.

Since the cells were lighter than the corridor, the hole was normally a white spot. It was obvious that, when the hole grew dark, my opposite number also had his eye glued to it. But all I could see was that the hole grew dark; I could not see the eye.

The intervals lasted only a few seconds; it was unlikely that the man could be peering out, turning away and then peering out again with such regularity. It seemed probable that he was trying to signal to me.

I began to cover up my spy-hole with my hand and uncover it again at the same regular intervals. Then I slowed down the tempo, then accelerated it. But there was no change in the rhythm opposite. Now I placed a finger right over the hole; at first horizontally, then vertically. I did this three times, and then stopped in dismay, for it occurred to me that I had been making the sign of the cross.

But my *vis-à-vis* did not react. The light and the darkness alternated, still at the same regular intervals, with depressing monotony.

I racked my brains to make out what the man was getting at. He could not produce this effect merely by pacing up and down, for the intervals were too short. And suddenly I had it; I knew what the man was doing, I could see it physically before me.

He was standing with his legs straddled in front of his cell door and moving his head from side to side, right, left, right, left, like a nodding bear. He must have been in the very last stages of apathy and despair.

I knocked on my door. I made all kinds of shapes with my fingers against the spy-hole. No reaction.

This completely got me down. Once more I lay down on the bed and dozed off. I tried to recite poems to myself, but my mind had ceased to function. The helm was refusing to obey.

About four o'clock there was a noise in the corridor. An oily voice read out a list of forty to fifty names; doors flew open and were slammed to again. A trampling of feet, whispering, mysterious sounds. This time I put my ear instead of my eye to the spy-hole. All I could discern was that a long file of men was starting to move off; then the tramping died away. Forty to fifty men had been led off. Where? I did not dare to admit to myself that there was only one possibility. But during the next hour I kept looking at my watch, and at five o'clock I said to myself: it's all over for them by now.

Shortly after five I was fetched from my cell. A warder whom I had not yet seen asked me whether I knew a "certain Mitchell", and whether I knew where he was. He spoke in a fairly kindly manner and seemed to be very flustered about Sir Peter. He took me to the office, where several Phalangists and an officer were sitting about, and said in vexed tones: "*He* doesn't know where the Englishman is, either."

The officer gave orders for the officials and me to search the prison for "Mitchell".

From which it became clear to me that they had not

even a complete list of the names of their prisoners. To be a "Red" was quite enough; what did the name matter? Mass graves need no inscriptions.

We wandered through the labyrinth of corridors and courtyards. First through the courtyards; there were three or four of them, and they were all cram full of men waiting to be shot, Militiamen and men from the working-class districts of the town. They stood about in groups or sat on the ground, staring straight ahead. They were all unshaven; they all had the same leaden, hollow-eyed gaze, the same flickering, hunted look of brute fear in their eyes as they glanced up at the warder and me. They must have taken me for an informer.

"Can you see him?" the warder whispered in my ear. I replied that I could not.

Taking me by the arm, the warder led me into the middle of the courtyard. There was a clear space all round us. I could feel that they thought I was an informer. I could feel their hatred, and looked down at the ground. "Don't be afraid," roared the warder. "We haven't come for anyone this time. Is there anyone among you who is an Englishman and is called Mitchell?"

No one replied, and we went on to the next courtyard. There were three or four courtyards; and each presented the same picture. I estimated that there were fifteen hundred to two thousand men in the prison. That makes ten thousand bullets, I calculated, and about seventy thousand un-lived years.

Then we looked into one or two cells. In some of them, which were no bigger than mine, five to six men had been herded. There was no room to lie down; they sat side by side on the floor, as though in a railway carriage, waiting for the end of the journey.

We also passed the cell of my *vis-à-vis*; this corridor contained only isolation cells occupied by single prisoners. I asked the warder who the man was. He looked at me in astonishment. "Who should he be? Why, a Red like you." At the end of the corridor we met an elegant young officer.

Stopping us, he asked us whether we had found Chalmers-Mitchell.

The warder replied in the negative.

The officer asked me in broken English whether it was true that Chalmers-Mitchell was "an English aristocrat".

"I should just think he *is*," I said. "He is a member of a very old aristocratic family, and a great friend of the King." I said this so convincingly that the young officer turned quite pale. Determining to make the most of the situation, I introduced myself and said that I regretted that I was obliged to make his acquaintance in such an unshaven state.

He was completely taken aback, and announced his own name: "Franco."

He almost gave me his hand.

I asked him if he could arrange for me to be taken before the court in order that the mistake with regard to my arrest might be cleared up as quickly as possible.

He said that he had no say in such matters, but that the National Army never made a mistake.

I said that in time of war there must surely be occasional exceptions. It certainly could not, for example, be the express intention of the National Army that I should have been left without food for thirty-six hours.

"Aha!" he said, with a sarcastic smile, "so you've gone on hunger strike."

I replied that I was not on hunger strike, but had been given nothing to eat. But that was of no importance; the important thing was that I should be given a hearing.

He shrugged his shoulders, and I quickly tried to change the subject before he left us; I asked him with polite interest whether he was related to General Franco.

Whereupon he flushed crimson, turned his back on me and walked off.

"*Vamos*," said the official, "we must go on."

We went back to my cell. I was about to say something more, but he banged the door in my face.

This exciting episode was over, and I was alone once more.

About seven o'clock I heard the sound of shuffling feet and a great clatter and din in the corridor. I rushed to the spy-hole. Two warders were dragging along an enormous tub, about the size of a baby's bath, with a brown liquid in it. It was coffee. Two others were carrying a huge basket of bread.

The cell door opposite was opened, and at last I set eyes on my *vis-à-vis*, the bear. At first all that I could see in the half-light was the bearded lower part of his face and a tattered shirt, stiff with congealed blood. He was standing in the corner of the cell furthest away from the door, his back pressed against the wall, his hand raised defensively in front of his face.

"*Hombre*," said the warder who was carrying the ladle, an amiable old fellow, "we're only bringing the coffee. There's no beating here in prison."

He filled the ladle with coffee and handed it to the bear, who put out both hands for it and gulped down its contents with terrifying avidity. He gulped and smacked his lips; it sounded just like a dog drinking. The four warders stood looking on. Then one of them handed him a hunk of bread from the basket. The man pressed the loaf against his shirt and gaped at the warders, that same hunted, half-crazy look still in his eyes. He panted audibly. Then, obviously after a struggle, he asked:

"There won't be any more beating?"

"Not here in prison," said the old warder.

He was about to shut the door when my *vis-à-vis* pressed his outstretched hand against it and asked:

"When . . .?"

This was all he managed to get out.

The old warder shrugged his shoulders and closed the door.

The coffee and bread procession continued on its way from cell to cell of the row opposite. My field of vision was only wide enough to take in the bear's cell; but I could hear them coming along my row from the end of the corridor. Shortly before they reached my cell, a fifth warder came up with an armful of tin drinking vessels—old tinned-food containers and little petrol cans.

I was given my tin full of coffee and my hunk of bread. But I had long since been considering whether it would not be better, now that I had already gone thirty-six hours without food and drink, to go on fasting and so weaken my powers of resistance as much as possible. While I had paced up and down, the screams of the tortured victims in the police station had continued to ring in my ears, almost as vividly as though I were the victim of a hallucination. If it comes to it, I thought, the weaker one is the quicker one will lose consciousness. So I poured the coffee down the W. C., and the bread too, after having broken it up into little pieces. Then I crouched on my wire mattress and tried to go to sleep.

I must have dozed off when the oily voice that I had heard in the morning woke me up again.

This time it came through the barred window from one of the courtyards through which I had wandered in my search for Sir Peter. It read out twenty-five to thirty names. I could not count them exactly; the long Spanish names confused me. This time all those whose names were called out had to answer "present", and if the answer did not come promptly, the oily voice burst forth into a flood of abuse. Then it called out:

"All those from cell No. 17."

"All those from cell No. 23."

These were the nameless ones, who were called anonymously to account before the God of the crusaders. And they could not even say: "*Eli, eli, lama sabachthani. . . .*"

The oily voice rose up twice more that night; once

about midnight—sixty names—once shortly before dawn. The last time it came from a distant wing of the prison, an indistinct, faint murmur; I could not keep count.

Then another day dawned.

It was Thursday now, and still not forty-eight hours since I had been a free man, able to open doors with my own hand, comb my hair, wash, blow my nose, and ring for the maid to bring me a drink.

Whom did it profit that I should perish here?

About ten o'clock the "bear" was taken out of his cell.

This time no names were read out. A warder and two soldiers approached the cell at a businesslike pace. The warder swung the door open and called out to the inmate: "*Valor, hombre*" (Courage, man), and hurried on to the next cell; the soldiers seized the bear and led him away out of my field of vision. Three more times I heard that "*Valor, hombre*" from varying distances in my corridor. Then all was silent again, and I no longer had a *vis-à-vis*.

For two days I had eaten nothing, and during the previous night I had slept little or not at all. After the "*Valor, hombres*" I was pretty well at the end of my tether.

Since my release I have often been asked what I thought about during those hours, and what goes on in the mind of a man in such a situation. I shall try to answer this kind of question by means of an example, for the private consumption of readers who are interested in psychology. Those who are not had better skip the next few paragraphs.

Well, I thought, there is no point at all in going on with this. Then it occurred to me that they had taken my belt away but not my tie. Above the bed was an iron hook for clothes. But the hook was placed very low and the idea was not very tempting. I pulled myself up by the bars of the window and in the cobwebby empty window frame discovered a splinter of glass. It was as sharp as I needed

for my purpose. I was delighted with my discovery, but thought it would be better to wait until night.

The fact that I had made a decision which I regarded as final filled me with a kind of utter contentment. I thought how furious Bolín would be, and what wry faces the propaganda department in Burgos would pull when the scandal leaked out. I became really cheerful, and the barometer rose at an astonishing rate. I called to memory, just by way of a test, the scene when the bear was led away, and the scenes in the police station. They now left me completely cold. I thought of friends and relatives—for the first time, for hitherto I had deliberately suppressed all thought of them—and found that I was not in the least bit moved. I was very proud of this Olympian frame of mind, and, true to the penny novelette, thought: nothing has power to move him who is done with life.

It was not until much later, in Seville, when, to while away the time, I and a fellow-prisoner, also condemned to death—I don't know if he is still alive—were analysing the various forms of prison psychosis, that I obtained a real insight into the secret of this magic metamorphosis. The whole thing was one of those conjuring tricks that the tenacious instinct for self-preservation plays on the consciousness in a critical situation. In this case the illusion consisted in the fact that by coming to an apparent decision to take my life I felt I had snatched for myself twelve untroubled hours. My state of Olympian calm was not, as I thought, the result of the decision itself, but of my having set a time limit of twelve hours. Up till now I had counted hourly on hearing the oily voice calling out my name; now, as a result of this illusory decision I had granted myself twelve hours' grace. This was why I was so cheerful.

I remained so until the afternoon, and then became even more cheerful when the door opened and the kindly old warder and an assistant dragged in a straw mattress. It was a dirty old mattress, and the straw sagged and

stank, but when it had been laid over the iron springs and I had stretched myself out on it, I felt in all my aching joints and limbs how marvellously comforting and luxurious it was compared with the iron springs which cut into the flesh. I grunted with satisfaction; the two warders looked on and grinned while I tried the mattress. They must have seen the same thing happen many times before, and have been well aware of the enormous difference between a cell with a mattress and one without.

But a man is never satisfied; no sooner is his most urgent wish fulfilled than a second makes itself felt. I wanted not only to have a soft, but a warm, bed to lie in. It was of course no use even dreaming of a blanket. So I tried to lie underneath the straw mattress and to use it as a blanket, but this arrangement was not very satisfactory. Finally I hit upon an idea. With my splinter of glass I cut a long slit at the top end of the sacking and crept into it as I was, clothes, shoes and all, crawling into it feet foremost, and then worming my way in bit by bit until only my head peeped forth from the slit. I felt I looked like an Egyptian mummy, and I promptly fell into a blissful sleep.

But the chain of lucky events was not yet over for that day. At five o'clock we were again brought a meal, although it was not yet twenty-four hours since we had last been fed. This time we were given a tin of corned beef per head and a hunk of bread. The meals in this prison, both as regards the times at which they were served and the menus, were, to say the least, of it, original.

I decided that with my treasured splinter of glass in my pocket there was no longer any reason why I should go hungry, and ate all my bread and half the corned beef at one sitting. The only thing lacking to make my state of contentment perfect was a glass of water. But after all, you can't expect to have everything in this life. I burrowed back into the straw, scratched myself for a while, and fell asleep again.

I was awakened at about ten o'clock in the evening by

a noisy clatter and trampling of feet in the corridors. I was already an expert at diagnosing the prison noises, and realized at once that a new batch of prisoners was being brought in. The doors of a number of the adjoining cells, which the oily voice had freed of their inmates that morning, were opened and closed. Then my door too was opened.

A young man came in, or rather was hurled in. The door closed behind him immediately. He stood leaning against the wall, his head drooping forwards. His shirt presented the appearance to which I was by now accustomed; it was tattered, and spattered with blood. The lacerated head, covered with contusions and clotted blood, and the wild look in the eyes were also by now familiar to me. New to me, however, was a certain something about the face of this man, an anatomical irregularity which I could not at first make out; his lower jaw was dislocated and pushed out of its socket; it was set unbelievably askew in his face, as though it had been put on the wrong way round. No sooner had I set eyes on him than I felt ill.

I crept out of the sacking and signed to him to sit down on the bed. He did not respond. I took him by the hand, led him two paces over to the bedstead and helped him to sit down. He continued to stare straight ahead, felt his jaw with his hand and recoiled as though he had burned himself. In my embarrassment I handed him some of the corned beef that had been left over, but he merely turned his head away. He could obviously neither eat nor speak. Perhaps not even think; but only suffer and be afraid and await the *coup de grâce*.

I sat down opposite him on the ground and held his hand. After a while he withdrew it. Fumbling slowly under his belt he produced two cigarette stumps. I took them and lit one of them; it was so short that I had to bend my head back horizontally to avoid burning my nose and lips. The human wreck grinned slightly out of the corners of his eyes, and signed to me to keep the other stump; for in any case he had no more use for it. I sat opposite

him for a few minutes, not daring to say anything; any word of consolation seemed to me childish and somehow blasphemous. It was not until I was in Seville that I learned the simple fact that every prisoner, however hopeless his situation, is relieved when told that nothing is going to happen to him, that he is soon going to be released, and other absurdities of the same kind. The logical content of what he is told is of no importance; the mere assurance is enough; he will swallow it like a drug.

In Seville three of us managed to lull to death in this way a little Militiaman who was more afraid even than most people of execution. He knew that we were lying, and we knew that he knew it; and yet he was comforted, and was as grateful as a child for the few words which cost us nothing.

Our silent *tête-à-tête* lasted only a few minutes; then my guest was taken away. He did not even turn his head at the cell door. They took him off to the left towards the front gate. I did not hear a cell door close behind him.

Requiescat in pace.

The Olympian calm had been completely dissipated, and my misery had returned. The time had come for the splinter of glass to play its part, but I was far too apathetic to do anything at all. I didn't care two straws about anything; all I wanted was to creep into my sacking and seek oblivion. At this moment I was really convinced that it was only out of laziness and apathy that I did not commit suicide. Of course I was deceiving myself again. The instinct of self-preservation, shrewd and indestructible as it is, assumes the most subtle masks. That morning it had presented itself in the toga of Socrates, who, calm and collected, reaches out for the draught of hemlock. The mask had served its purpose; it had helped the mind through a crucial moment. Now it appeared in a new garb; that of St. Simeon Stylites, who squats on his column and lets the worms devour him.

That night the oily voice rang out but once. I no longer counted the names; I lay in my sack dozing, and was now just as convinced that nothing, not even the most ghastly experience, could shatter my indifference, as I had been that morning that it was my last morning on earth. I did not creep out of my sack again until the afternoon of the next day, Friday. And then only to take the food that was brought me—a hunk of bread and a tin full of Spanish white beans. It was my first acquaintanceship with prison bread, and was hardly pleasurable.

A little later someone on my corridor began to shout for water. "*Agua, agua,*" he yelled, and drummed on the door with his fists. This seemed to me a very good idea; I was horribly thirsty after the beans, and the endless dozing on the bed had re-awakened my desire for action. I too began to drum on the door and to yell "*agua, agua*". Somewhere or other a third prisoner joined in, and shortly afterwards the whole wing was drumming away and yelling "*agua, agua*".

The warders arrived on the scene and burst into a terrible flood of invective from the corridor. For a few moments there was silence; then I began to drum and yell again, and the whole wing joined in. I thought they would be sure to come and beat me up, but was not in the least afraid; on the contrary only wished that at long last something would happen. I was not acting out of rage, but out of a kind of nervous excitement and craving for action. I felt refreshed after my long sleep and was in a highly fretful, wide-awake state. I found the drumming terrific fun.

After a few minutes our efforts were rewarded. The warders brought an enormous tub of water and doled it out to each of us in turn. I was given the choice of drinking either out of the greasy tin of beans or out of the ladle, and chose the latter. I drank three ladlefuls and tried to smack my lips as the "bear" had done.

The pathological desire to do something persisted. I tried to think what I could do and decided to write a short story—of course only in my head, since there were neither paper nor writing materials to hand. I started off with an animal story—about a dog who is used to driving in a car with his master, and when the master is ruined and has to sell his car, sinks into a state of melancholia. It was to have been a very funny story, but after the first few sentences it became unbearably sentimental, and, again in my head, I crossed the whole thing out with a large blue pencil.

Then I set about deciphering the inscriptions scratched on the cell walls. They were mostly names, with the date of arrest, and they went back as far as 1934; probably that was the last time the cell had been whitewashed. Some of the names were accompanied by a protestation of innocence; the prisoner presumably counting on the warder's reading it and passing on the information to his superiors. A great many had added to their names the initials of their party; the most frequent were the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. The Communists never wrote the initial letters of their party (P.C.E.), but drew, instead, a hammer and sickle or a Soviet star. The initials of the Socialist Party figured only once—Social-Democrats in all countries are tidy, discreet folk who do not write on walls. More frequent was the U.G.T., the initials of the Socialist Trades Union organization.

All these inscriptions obviously dated from the period before the elections of February, 1936. But the inmates of the cell after this date—members of Right-wing parties, perhaps even priests—had left no tell-tale traces behind. Not once did I come upon the C.E.D.A., the initials of Gil Robles' party, nor even a simple cross. And yet the prison was as chock-full during Malaga's "red" period as it was now. Why had the reactionaries not followed the example of their predecessors? Had they less courage or less attachment to their party, or did they simply not feel the need to immortalize themselves?

There were neither verses nor obscenities among the

inscriptions; at the most one female name with a few poetic attributes scrawled beneath it. And even the popular heart pierced with a Cupid's arrow, the natural home of which is usually the bark of trees and park benches, appeared only twice.

Somehow or other this night too passed. After the excitable mood of the last twenty-four hours with its continual ups and downs, a relatively normal state of mind set in. I reflected that four days had now passed since my arrest, and that I had not yet been brought up for examination. To be shot without trial was a likely possibility only during the massacres immediately following on the capture of a town. When conditions had settled down to some extent, it seemed to me, my chances would improve. Viewed objectively, these chances seemed minimal; my first book with all its documentary evidence of the rebel atrocities was there to convict me out of my own mouth, and the fact that I had, so to speak, crept into Seville and then later on publicly denounced breaches of the Non-Intervention agreement, was ground enough for me to be condemned to death by a Franco court-martial, quite apart from Bolín's personal fury.

On the other hand, I hoped that the news of my arrest would somehow or other have reached England, and that there would be protests. Time would work in my favour, and a five per cent chance is always better than no chance at all.

I whiled away the sleepless parts of the night with these relatively consoling reflections.

What I did *not* know was that the court-martial in Malaga had already pronounced sentence of death on me without my being summoned before it.

The second thing that I did not know was that up to this time—Saturday, February 13th, 1937—five thousand men had been shot in Malaga since the fall of the town; six hundred from my prison alone.

III

ROUND ABOUT MIDDAY on Saturday, the fourth day after my arrest, the door of my cell swung open again.

Outside there stood, not the now familiar figures of the warders, but two Civil Guards with rifles and fixed bayonets.

"*Venga,*" they said, "Come."

I still had one last cigarette in my breast pocket. I had had nothing to smoke for three days, but I had been saving this one cigarette for the time when the oily voice should call out my name. I had racked my brains to discover how to manage to preserve a decent demeanour during those last moments, and had thought that a cigarette might perhaps help.

When I saw the two men standing at the door with their bayonets, I thought that the moment had come to light up. I had just put the cigarette in my mouth when one of the Civil Guards produced a most comforting object from his pocket: a pair of steel handcuffs. I knew that they used a cord to bind the hands of those whom they were taking out to be shot; handcuffs are too precious, and removing them from a corpse is far too arduous a business. The only factory in Spain that manufactures handcuffs, by the way, is in Bilbao, and Bilbao was at that time still in Government hands. There was an inexhaustible supply of human cattle for the slaughter on the Spanish market, but a shortage of handcuffs.

At this moment, therefore, the lovely shining steel handcuffs were indeed the most refreshing sight that I could have wished for. I meekly folded my hands, and the handcuffs shut to with a snap. I marvelled at the complicated and skilful mechanism of what seemed such a simple apparatus; on each of the wristlets was a little cog-wheel, to make it adjustable for any size of wrist. The elder of the Civil Guards even enquired if the catch chafed my wrists—he asked this neither out of friendliness nor ironically,

but merely in the businesslike, matter-of-fact tones of a tailor who is fitting a customer with a suit. Then we marched off down the corridors and out into the street.

Outside the prison gate stood a big lorry and an elegant little sports car. We made for the sports car. On the bonnet were four copper plaques: the first engraved with the Swastika between two wings, the second with the Roman fasces, the third with the five black arrows of the *Falange Española*, and the fourth the coat of arms of the Bourbon dynasty. The latter seemed somewhat *de trop*.

Then an officer with a riding crop came rushing up to tell the Civil Guards that he was requisitioning the car, and that the lorry was good enough for us, anyway. My guards seemed put out, but did not dare to protest, and we clambered into the lorry, which was already loaded to capacity with forty prisoners and their armed escorts.

I was so exhilarated by the fresh air and the sudden change of scene after four days of prison that for the first few moments I gazed round at my fellow prisoners almost gaily.

Then I noticed that their hands were bound with cords. There were, besides, about ten to fifteen of them bound together in a group with longer cords.

We stood closely packed together. As the heavy lorry started up, we had to hold on to each other and to the Civil Guards to keep our balance. There was about the same number of Civil Guards as victims; holding their rifles in one hand, they too sought to steady themselves by putting an arm round the shoulder of a neighbour, regardless of whether he was a fellow-guard or a man whom half an hour later they would be shooting, sending a bullet through his eye or his nose.

I still had my unlighted cigarette between my lips. The Civil Guard who had put the handcuffs on me lit a cigarette for himself and was about to give me a light. I told him that it was my last cigarette and that I wanted to keep it for later on, and put it back in my pocket. He

then rolled me a cigarette and handed round his tobacco-pouch and paper amongst the others, both Civil Guards and prisoners. A Civil Guard helped those prisoners whose hands were bound too tightly to roll their cigarettes, holding out the finished article for them to give a final lick.

The Civil Guards looked like Andalusian farm labourers or peasants, and the prisoners too looked like Andalusian farm labourers or peasants. There was no hostility between the two groups. We were, rather, like a charabanc party, all the members of which were going on the same excursion for the same purpose, far away from the noise of the big city to some green spot in the countryside. Arrived at our destination, the various rôles would be assigned: some would stand up against a wall, the others would send hot leaden projectiles into their flesh. Both groups would, of course, rather be playing football; but that would not do.

We exchanged cigarettes and clung to each other when the lorry gave a lurch; but none of us spoke.

With one exception. One of the Civil Guards, with glasses and a corporal's stripes, who was standing pressed against the barrier in a particularly cramped position, remarked with a grin to the man next to him:

"We shall be a lot more comfortable on the return journey."

But only one or two people heard, and no one answered.

In the vicinity of the station the motorised tumbrel drew up, and I and my two guards alighted. The first one jumped down and helped me, since I could not use my hands, and then the second jumped down after us. The lorry drove on again. The prisoners looked after us, and I could feel envy and contempt in their gaze. Even the Civil Guards who remained in the lorry as it drove on again looked at us with something like hatred. We were distinguished outsiders, we had broken the bond of a common fate. We all three gazed after the lorry as it disappeared in a cloud of dust. One of my guards turned to me and

went through the motions of pulling the trigger of his rifle, to dispel any lingering doubts on my part. Then he rolled cigarettes for the three of us, and we entered the station.

This Civil Guard was a lanky, loose-limbed fellow with an absurd, horse-like face. He had long, yellow, equine teeth, a flat nose, and the good-natured, stupid eyes of a cabhorse. He was called Pedro.

The other was short and sturdy, with a bronzed, vital peasant's face. He was called Luis.

While we stood about in the waiting-room, I asked the lanky Don Pedro where they were taking me. "To Seville," he said, and showed me a typed order in which it was stated that "the individual A.K. is to be brought to Seville under safe escort, and to be delivered up to the jurisdiction of the Commander of the Southern Fighting Forces of the National Army, General González Queipo de Llano."

I had secretly hoped that I should be taken to Burgos or Salamanca. Of all the cities of the globe Seville was the one the name of which sounded most unfriendly to my ears. And of all the powers of this world the one whom I had most cause to fear was General González Queipo de Llano.

It was scarcely six months since I had seen him face to face. The interview that he had given me in an unguarded moment and the brief but unfriendly character-sketch that I had drawn of him had already appeared, not only in the Press, but in book form, in French. Queipo read French, and the book very likely lay on his desk beside my dossier. I could just picture his face when he saw the flattering portrayal of his character and personality set down in black and white before his eyes. The thought that I was going to be handed over to the special jurisdiction of General Queipo de Llano aroused in me a feeling akin to that of a roamer in the jungle who has inadvertently trodden on the tail of a tiger.

We got into the train. It was an ancient train with a funny little engine and funny little carriages that looked like wooden boxes on wheels. We wormed our way into a

third class compartment in which a large peasant family was already installed: father, mother, grandmother, a half-grown daughter and a baby. The family moved up closer to one another and respectfully left the two corner seats by the window to the two Civil Guards. I sat next to the lanky Don Pedro; next me was the mother with the baby, opposite me the grandmother, and next to her in the corner the adolescent daughter. She was very pretty, and she cast stealthy glances at my grimy, but still recognizably foreign, suit. I kept my hands hidden in my sleeves like a monk, so that the handcuffs were not immediately visible. The train ambled off.

The grandmother had already got into conversation with Don Pedro and Don Luis. At first they talked of the weather, then about the orange crop, then about the war. I learned that Motril had fallen some time ago, and that the fall of Almería was hourly expected. Both the peasants and my guards avoided expressing any opinion or taking sides; they referred to Franco's army not as "*los nuestros*", "our people", but as "*los Nacionales*". The guards referred to the other side as "*los Rojos*" (the Reds) but the grandmother spoke of them as "*los Valencianos*". The family came from Antequera, the village that Pizarro used to raid for cigarettes and seed corn. In the first chaotic days after the insurrection they had fled to Malaga to take refuge with relatives and had been unable to return to their own village, which was on the other side of the Front. Then "*los Nacionales*" had taken Malaga, and now they were returning home.

Don Luis asked the husband what things had been like in Malaga under the Reds.

The man shrugged his shoulders and said that he had never troubled his head about politics.

The mother sighed and murmured something about the war's being a great misfortune.

The grandmother said that it was foreigners who were to blame for the whole tragedy; on the other side the Russians,

and on this side the Germans and Italians. Then she clapped her hand to her mouth, and enquired with a sly, apologetic smile if I were a German airman.

No, I told her, I was an English journalist.

The daughter looked at me with interest. Don Pedro and Don Luis grinned, but tactfully and discreetly held their tongues.

The grandmother wanted to know what the King of England thought about "the whole Spanish muddle".

I said that His Majesty had not yet come to any final conclusion, for the opinions of his advisers were somewhat contradictory.

Whereupon Don Pedro enquired, giving a crafty wink and baring his equine teeth, whether there were also "Reds" in England. Don Luis too winked at me and burst out into raucous laughter. They both nudged me with their knees, and would obviously have been offended if I had not shared in their mirth. I did my best and joined in. It was a little secret between the three of us.

"After all," said the grandmother, "he's a Red himself."

This remark released a positive flood of laughter from Don Pedro and Don Luis, and the grandmother was very proud of her joke.

And since we were all in such merry mood, she took down from the rack, with the help of the mother, their basket of provisions and a bottle of red wine.

She offered us lovely red paprika sausage and cheese and white bread and wine. The Civil Guards accepted with alacrity; I refused. The whole family pressed me to eat. I did not move my hands from my sleeves. It was a ghastly situation. The guards looked at each other; then Don Luis seized me firmly by the arm and removed the handcuffs. The whole family literally goggled, and sat there in a state of suspended animation, like wax figures in a panopticon.

"Holy Mother of God!" cried the grandmother. Then she looked at me and added softly:

"Your poor mother!"

Then she passed me sausage and cheese and made the sign of the cross over me.

I began eating, and wiped the beads of sweat from my forehead. The daughter looked away, biting her lip, and flushed a fiery red. The baby, who had crawled on to the floor whilst the food was being unpacked, now crawled up to Don Luis and tried to play with the handcuffs.

It was about four hours before we reached Antequera. It was not on our direct route; the train made endless détours. We ate and drank a great deal, but indulged in no more conversation. Now and again, when the silence became painful, the taciturn peasant would say from his corner:

"Give the *Inglés* another bit of sausage," or

"Has the *Inglés* had any wine?"

He never addressed me directly. But the mother, who was at once the friendliest and the stupidest member of the family, said, as she pressed a slice of sweet cake into my hand:

"Eat up, Señor. Who knows how much longer you'll be able to eat!"

Whereat Don Pedro remarked jokingly:

"He's going to be shot to-morrow."

But his joke was coldly received, and Don Pedro grew quite embarrassed, obviously feeling that he had committed a *faux-pas*.

At one of the small stations he got out to get some water, giving me his rifle and the handcuffs to hold in the meantime. He did this as though absent-mindedly, in his hurry, but I had a feeling that he was doing it on purpose, to atone for his previous lapse. He brought back some tobacco and a packet of ten cigarettes at 10 centimos, which he presented to me. I handed them round and everyone took one out of politeness, although they were much inferior to the rolled ones.

In Antequera the family got out with a great deal of bustle and fuss. The grandmother once more made the

sign of the cross over me; the peasant, without a word, handed me an orange; the daughter blushed again and avoided looking at me. Then the train went on.

It was late afternoon by now, and we all three stretched ourselves out on the seat and fell asleep.

A few stations later more passengers got in, among them a young man and a somewhat corpulent gentleman of the upper classes. They too began a conversation, and in order to avoid fresh complications I explained that I was a prisoner, although the handcuffs had not been put on me again. The representative of the upper classes thereupon moved into the furthest corner of the carriage and kept glancing at me as though I were a leper. The young man who, like the peasant and everyone else on the train, wore the Nationalist cockade in his buttonhole, immediately offered me a cigarette, and, noticing that I had no coat and was shivering, his rug. He told me that he was going to Seville because he had been requested to report as a recruit to the Phalanx. I asked him why, then, he gave "an enemy" his rug. He shrugged his shoulders and winked ever so slightly. I do not know whether Queipo de Llano will be exactly pleased with this Phalangist, or with some thousands like him.

The handcuffs were not put on me again until we reached Seville.

It was quite late at night by then. Don Pedro and Don Luis were once more full of official solemnity, and we marched in single file into the *gendarmerie* on the station.

There a discussion took place as to what was to be done with me at this late hour—it was a quarter past twelve. There was no official car available, and the trams were no longer running. Don Luis suggested that they should take me to the Phalangist barracks just for the night. This was exactly what I had been dreading. I asked Don Pedro whether they could not take me to the prison instead. He grinned and said: "I suppose you don't like the idea of going to the Phalanx?" I said that I didn't. They both

grinned and whispered together for a while, and then Don Pedro said they would telephone to General Staff Headquarters, for that was, after all, the authority to deal with my case. They asked an official for the telephone book; he replied that there wasn't one, but that all official numbers were written up on the wall in the telephone booth. We went into the booth.

The walls were covered with numbers written in pencil. "Italian Base Headquarters, Number So-and-so," I read. "Italian Infantry Barracks, Number So-and-so." "Italian Infantry Barracks No. 2, Number So-and-so." "Italian Commissariat, Number So-and-so."

The tourist traffic in the town of Seville had obviously increased since my last visit.

At last our joint efforts resulted in our finding the number of the General Staff of the Southern Forces.

Don Luis telephoned, and half an hour later a car came to the station to fetch us.

We drove through the streets of Seville, past the Hotel Madrid, where I had once stayed, past the Hotel Cristina, where I had met Strindberg and the German pilots, past the Phalangist barracks, where I had seen the blood-bespattered prisoners being marched in, to the familiar residence of the "radio General". It was an eerie drive, worse than the drive to the Malaga prison when I had imagined that I was being taken to the cemetery. Don Pedro and Don Luis were silent, and I longed for them never to leave me.

The corridors of Staff Headquarters were nocturnally bleak and deserted. Only in a few rooms were people still working; we were sent from one to another, and no one knew what to do with us. Finally we landed up somewhere in the decoding department. There we found a pleasant official who said we might all three sleep on the floor. Don Luis had already squatted on the floor to take off his boots when an officer appeared and ordered us out. He

said I had no business to be in the decoding department; the place for me was the police station. So we wandered off to the police station.

Don Pedro and Don Luis were tired out and in a bad temper; I was obviously a nuisance to them, and they would much rather have let me go. But that would never have done; and so at length we ended up in the police station.

We found ourselves in a smelly office, where a surly fellow noted down particulars of my case and also took my finger prints. Then he called two sergeants. They stood to attention at their Chief's table—two gorillas. They saluted, and one of them asked in an official tone:

“Una flagelación?”

Flagelación is the term used for the first beating to which an arrested man is subjected in Spanish police-stations. It is an illegal but official practice carried out in most countries of Europe. In France it is called *passer à tabac*, and in Germany *die erste Abreibung*.

Don Luis bent assiduously over to the Chief and whispered a few words in his ear. All I could catch was: “*Inglés—periodista.*” Whereupon the *flagelación* was dispensed with.

I was greatly relieved, and the two gorillas, balked of their prey, led me into a kind of cage with an iron grille. Don Luis and Don Pedro, a few minutes later, when their official papers had been examined and stamped, came past the cage. I called out to them and thanked them for being so nice to me on the journey. They grew very embarrassed, and shook hands with me in turn through the grille. The gorillas opened their eyes wide, and my two friends departed.

They were not exceptions; they were two out of twenty-five million for the most part kindly Spaniards. Had they been given orders, before we made friends on the journey, to strike me dead or to shoot me, they would have done so with complete sang-froid. Had they been fellow-prisoners, they would have shared their last cigarette with me. Had I, on the other hand, made the railway journey with the

two unfriendly gorillas, we would most likely have parted with the same cordial feelings.

I believe that in general we are given to over-estimating the importance of the individual character. Society allows the individual only very restricted scope for the realization of his primitive inclinations. What matters is not what a man is, but what function the social system dictates that he shall fulfil.

These are banal reflections, but the application of them to a civil war leads to somewhat paradoxical results, and explains to some extent why Anarchism is so popular in Spain. To the Anarchist the human problem is as simple as cracking nuts; you break the hard shell and savour the delicious kernel. An attractive theory; only I should like to know if trees will ever bear nuts without shells.

One is never so curious about the future of humanity as when one is locked up in an iron cage, guarded by two gorillas, and would rather think of anything but one's own future. I believe that the greatest possible pleasure you could give to a condemned man on his way to the electric chair would be to tell him that a comet was on the way which would destroy the world the very next day. . . .

Round about two or three o'clock in the morning a car arrived and transported me, under the escort of the two gorillas, right across the sleeping city, across the Guadalquivir bridge and down deserted avenues, to the distant prison of Seville.

IV

THE SIGHT OF the prison building looming up out of the darkness was as comforting to me as had been the sight of the handcuffs fifteen hours earlier. I knew by this time that prisoners were only beaten and maltreated at police-stations, Phalangist headquarters and barracks, but not in prison. There were two roads leading out of prison:

to freedom or the firing squad. But so long as one was in prison itself, one was safe.

I surveyed the massive building with feelings of grateful affection. The rottenness of a civilization that is threatened by incipient madness reveals itself in curious symptoms. In the fact, for example, that the stone walls of prisons no longer serve to protect society from the prisoner, but the prisoner from society.

The prison of Seville had been built in the first few years after the Spanish revolution, in 1931 or 1932. The young and ambitious Republic wished to emulate, and, if possible, to excel, the civilized West in everything. Among its finest achievements must be counted reforms in the sphere of penology, up till that time on a medieval level in Spain. The "model prisons" which were built in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville are, in fact, the best and most up-to-date prisons in Europe.

We crossed the lovely garden in front of the main gate, rang—here too there was a night bell—and the gate was opened.

Three long corridors radiated out from the entrance hall; one leading straight on, the others to the right and to the left. The corridors were flanked by long, monotonous rows of cell doors, two tiers of them on either side. The cells on the upper floor opened on to narrow steel galleries which were reached by steel staircases. Each cell door bore a number and a name plate, and was fitted with a spy-hole. Everything that met the eye was of steel and concrete; everything looked fantastically standardized, symmetrical, machine-like. Gazing at this framework of steel one might have imagined oneself in the engine-room of a warship.

In the middle of the hall, facing the entrance, was a kind of glass case: the office. For the third time I went through the procedure of having my particulars noted, my person searched and my finger prints taken. The demeanour of the officials made one feel one was not in a prison, but in an income-tax office, in the midst of a group of polite and slightly bored clerks.

The gorillas took their departure. A young, friendly and taciturn warder took charge of me and led me down the central corridor. The first cell to the right which we passed—Cell No. 44—bore the name Caballero. Largo Caballero was at that time Prime Minister of the Government in Valencia. I knew that his son, whom the insurrection had taken by surprise in Seville, was being held as a hostage by the rebels. Some days before I had left London the newspapers had reported that he had been executed. So this news was false; for here on Cell No. 44 was the visiting card of Caballero Junior. This seemed to me very gratifying, and I had a positive urge to knock on his door and call out: "Doctor Livingstone, I presume?"

We passed cells Nos. 43 and 42; they bore Spanish names. At Cell No. 41 we stopped, and the warder unlocked the door. This, then, was my new home.

It was, if the adjective is in place here, a room of friendly, square proportions. The first thing that struck me was the big window opposite the door. It was let into a kind of alcove in the wall and began at the level of the head, so that by supporting one's elbows on the slant of the wall one could look out quite comfortably. The window gave on to the patio, a very large and dusty prison courtyard. It was protected by a solid iron grille, and outside the grille was fixed fine wire-netting, rather like a steel mosquito net.

Against the wall to the right was the iron bedstead, which could be folded back against the wall to allow more room for pacing up and down; opposite it was a steel table with a chair welded to it, also collapsible. At the foot of the bed was a large wash basin with running water; opposite it the W.C.

The warder tested the straw mattress, to which was attached a linen tab with a date stamped on it, obviously to show when the straw had last been changed and the mattress cleaned. He brought in a good woollen blanket and said that he would change both mattress and blanket for

clean ones next morning. Then he wished me good night and carefully locked the door from outside.

After Malaga it seemed to me that I was in a luxury hotel.

I went to the window and looked out. It was a starry night, and the courtyard was still and peaceful. Opposite my window, along the wall at the further end of the court, a guard patrolled up and down with fixed bayonet, smoking a cigarette. With a small effort of imagination one might have fancied that he was promenading up and down out there not in order to guard us but to protect us.

It was half-past two. I lay down on the straw mattress, revelled in the wonderful luxury of possessing a blanket, and fell contentedly asleep.

I was awakened by a bugle-blast; it was a quarter to seven in the morning. I assumed that it was the signal to get up, but feigned deafness and went on sleeping. The next time I woke up it was nine o'clock, and the sound of shouts and clattering feet came in through the window. I looked out; the courtyard was full of prisoners, who, with true Spanish fervour, were engaged in a football match, some as players, some as spectators.

There may have been three to four hundred men in the courtyard. They were not in uniform, and they were moving about quite freely in the great quadrangle, which was about a hundred yards by sixty. It was only some time later that I picked out a uniformed warder among them, who, a revolver in his belt and a rubber truncheon in his hand, patrolled up and down, exchanging a word here and there with the prisoners, or even pacing up and down in conversation with one of them. The prisoners all wore civilian clothes and yet created a fairly uniform impression, for the overwhelming majority of them appeared to be young Andalusian peasants and wore the same kind of clothes; bluish-green faded linen shirts and jackets. A uniform effect was created, moreover, by their unshaven state, their bare heads and bronzed faces. The young lads who were playing football chased across the courtyard after the ball, which

was made of rags bound together with string. Another group was engaged in a game of leap-frog along the opposite wall. When, under the force of the impact, one of the "frogs" fell flat on his stomach together with the jumper, there were roars of laughter. The warder stood by and joined in the fun. The more sedate elders were shying little pebbles at a target; others were sitting in the narrow strip of shade, reading.

And all this festive activity was going on just outside my window, which was on a level with the ground. After the bloody nightmare of Malaga it all seemed like a dream. For five days I had crouched in my isolation cell, which stank of blood and excrement, had not seen a single human countenance except that of the warder, had not heard a single human sound except the oily voice of the invisible herald of death. The hullabaloo in the courtyard, the change of scene, the plenitude of faces and human destinies that offered itself to the view, positively dazzled and intoxicated me.

I leaned on my elbows in the alcove, waved and called out to the courtyard. At first the fact that no one heard me or seemed to want to hear me did not worry me. Nor for the moment did the fact strike me that no one passed directly by my window, indeed, that an empty space several feet wide was left alongside the prison wall.

There was a rattling at the lock of my door. I turned away from the window to see who was coming; for the first time since my arrest I heard the cell door opening without my heart's being constricted with fear. It was the warder who had taken charge of me in the night; he looked round the cell and began to curse me for not having got up at the first bugle blast and washed the floor.

He roared until the walls shook, but it was nothing to worry about. He swore at me as a corporal swears at a recruit, and involuntarily I answered like a raw recruit who has just arrived in barracks and doesn't yet know the routine. He quickly calmed down and told me that I must

first sweep the flagstones with a broom and then scour them with a pail and floor-cloth.

I took the broom and began to sweep, assuming an air of distinguished incompetence, until the warder had had enough of it and said he would call the orderly to show me how to set about things. Opening the door he called out into the corridor:

"Angel, Angelito!"

The "angelkin" thus evoked came shuffling up and set about sweeping the floor with ape-like agility. He had the face of an old woman; his skin was like crinkled parchment and his figure that of a twelve-year-old child. He never once looked either me or the warder in the face, and as he crept about the cell on all fours, his eyes darted about swiftly, like the eyes of a shrew. In less than two minutes the cell had been swept, swilled with water and apparently thoroughly scoured. It was positively a star turn. When warder and angelkin had departed and the floor began to dry I could see that the flags were as dirty as before.

Shortly afterwards breakfast arrived: a tin bowl full of positively appetising coffee, ladled out of a huge tub, and a white roll.

It was Angelito who brought the breakfast round. He seemed to be maid-of-all-work here. I asked him to report that I should like to be shaved, so as not to look like a bandit at my trial; for I was expecting hourly to be at length brought to trial. But Angelito vouchsafed no reply and slammed the door in my face.

I once more took up my observation post at the window and watched the activities in the courtyard until midday. Bit by bit I began to pick out single individuals from the anonymous crowd. An old man was the first to rivet my attention; he must have been over seventy; he walked with a slight stoop and wore a warm woolly ulster. He immediately won my sympathy. Then there were a few boys of no more than thirteen or fourteen. I thought they must be hostages from "Red families". Three or four strikingly

elegantly dressed men with immaculate creases in their trousers and brightly polished shoes paced up and down apart from the others, with portentous expressions. I christened them "the dandies" and wondered what could have brought them here.

I wondered, too, whether all these men were political prisoners or criminals. Their faces seemed to suggest the former: but I noticed that about nine or ten of them were wearing a stripe in the Bourbon colours on their shirts, and that these were by no means shunned by the rest. This did not fit in with my ideas as to the atmosphere amongst political prisoners.

Everyone in the courtyard was smoking, and tobacco and cigarette papers were being handed round freely. After having been treated to cigarettes on the journey, I found my renewed abstinence particularly hard. I bored a tiny hole with my index finger in the wire mosquito net in front of my window—large enough for a cigarette to be pushed through. It was quite easy; I only had to force the wires apart a little. I knew that the inside of my cell must appear dark from the courtyard and so I pressed my face against the iron bars and began to make signs to those outside that I wanted something to smoke.

At first I had a feeling that it was only by chance that no one looked in my direction. I began to call out, but there was such a din in the quadrangle that I found it difficult to make myself heard; for after all I did not want to shout. All the same, those nearest to me must have heard. But no one responded.

To be ignored in this way gave me an extremely uncomfortable feeling. Now I noticed, too, that some of the prisoners could perfectly well hear and see my signals as they passed, but quickly averted their heads. And once more it occurred to me that no one came within ten paces of that part of the wall where my cell was.

At last I saw one of the peasant lads in a linen jacket

drawing the attention of some of the others to my window. But he did so very discreetly. Three or four of his companions looked stealthily in my direction. I gesticulated more vehemently and signed to them to pass a cigarette through to me. They seemed worried and at a loss to know what to do, and looked round anxiously at the warder, although he was at the further end of the courtyard. Then one of them quickly put a finger to his lips and shrugged his shoulders, and the group hurried off.

It takes some time to make out details in the chaotic bustle and stir of a courtyard containing three or four hundred people. Thus it was not until now that I noticed that a faded and scarcely visible white line, rather like the marking on a neglected tennis court, was drawn parallel to my wall. The line began at the end of my row of cells, in front of No. 44, the cell containing Caballero, ran past my window, and ended some cells further to the left, as far as I could tell in front of cell No. 36. Further down, from No. 35 downwards, the prisoners approached the wall quite freely and spoke to the inmates of the cells through the windows. But from Nos. 36 to 44 there was a no-man's land ten yards wide between the wall and the white line. The cells opposite this line, which included mine, were obviously taboo.

I also realized now that the men in the courtyard were afraid. Afraid of being watched. They obviously knew that every one of their movements was being spied upon. They could see what I could not see; that from the upper storey windows watchful glances were cast at the court below. The noisy, unhampered goings-on outside my window turned out to be an illusion. There must be something peculiar and uncanny behind all this demonstrative gaiety.

I suddenly felt as though I were present at a ghostly carnival. It seemed to me as though all these men who were playing football and leapfrog and strolling about in the bright sunshine of the courtyard were only waiting for the second cock-crow.

Why had I been put into one of the taboo cells? Why was I not allowed to join the others in the court and why were the prisoners in the court so afraid of looking in my direction? Was it indeed fear—or was it the instinctive dread with which the healthy avert their gaze from the gravely ill, who bear the stamp of death on their brows?

And now at last I admitted to myself what had gradually been dawning on me from the start. I had been put in one of the condemned cells.

The midday meal arrived: bean soup cooked in oil and a hunk of white bread. The soup was served in the same bowl out of which I had drunk my breakfast coffee and had slaked my thirst with water. Once more it was Angelito who brought me my food, this time, however, accompanied by a warder. The warder had a red full-moon face, and spoke a little French. He was glad to be able to air his knowledge to a foreigner, and listened patiently while I enumerated my requests: I wanted to be shaved, I wanted a bit of soap, a comb and a towel; I wanted pencil and paper in order to write to the British Consul; I wanted a book to read from the prison library, and some newspapers; I wanted to be allowed out into the courtyard like the other prisoners; I wanted back the money that had been confiscated from me to buy cigarettes and a change of linen.

He listened to all this attentively, and nodded after each sentence as though to indicate that he considered my wishes quite proper and reasonable.

I said that he had better write them down so as not to forget anything.

He replied that he never forgot anything, for he had a very good memory, and tapped his forehead to emphasize this. Then he said that he would come back in a moment, and disappeared. I waited for him to return, and he did in fact return—exactly a fortnight later, when his turn of

duty brought him to my cell again. He was just as friendly, talked away just as assiduously as the first time, and listened just as patiently while I enumerated exactly the same requests that I had repeated three times a day for a fortnight to his fellow-warders—and with just as little success.

The midday meal arrived shortly before one; at one the prisoners were brought back into their cells from the courtyard. The siesta in Spain lasts from one to three; in offices, factories, at the front and in prison.

For about a quarter of an hour the great quadrangle lay empty and deserted.

Then immediately opposite my cell the door was opened and two prisoners were let out into the courtyard.

They were both very tidily and neatly dressed. They immediately began to march up and down at a rapid pace. One had a slightly swaying, dandified gait, and something definitely daring and enterprising about him. I christened him "Lord Byron". His friend was quieter and more self-contained; his cheeks were extraordinarily hollow, and he gave one the impression of being a consumptive.

They walked up and down the whole length of the courtyard without stopping for two hours, until the stroke of three. Then a warder took them back into the prison. Ten minutes later the crowd of the morning was once more let out into the courtyard.

I passed the afternoon spying out of my alcove window, but I no longer tried to signal or to get into touch with the throng outside. I was glad enough for no one to look in the direction of my window, glad to take part in the brilliant life outside as a silent and invisible onlooker.

Shortly before seven the evening meal was brought: lentil soup cooked in oil and a hunk of bread.

The prisoners were fed outside.

Shortly before eight they were brought back into the building. The empty courtyard was soon flooded with darkness.

At nine a bugle was sounded. At ten the Spanish last post, a very sentimental and melancholy melody, was sounded:

In the cell above me someone took his shoes off and let them fall with a clatter on to the stone floor.

Then the noises died down and the deaf silence of the prison filled every crack and cranny as though with cotton wool.

But the electric light in my cell burned the whole night long.

V

DURING THIS SECOND night in Seville I repeatedly started up out of my dreams, thinking I could hear noises and the oily voice of the Malaga prison. But there was utter silence. It was good to have a light burning, even though the bulb in the ceiling shone straight into my eyes.

Electric lights scare away nocturnal spectres. Still drowsy from my nightmare, I told myself that this was a real prison and not a slaughter-house like the place in Malaga; after seven months of civil war conditions had no doubt become normal again. Here there were certainly no more executions. True, I had been put in a condemned cell, but that probably meant nothing at all. The day here had its prescribed course, life was ordered, there were bugle-blasts, even the mattresses bore tabs stamped with the date. Incidentally it occurred to me that, despite the warder's promise, my mattress and blanket had not been changed. This annoyed me; and then I felt glad at being able to get annoyed again about trifles. Lord, I begged, go on giving me my little daily vexations. Permit me, O Lord, to continue to be discontented with this existence, to curse my work, not to answer my letters, and to be a trial to my friends. Am I to swear to grow better if Thou lettest this cup pass from me? We both of us know, Lord, Thou and I, that such extorted oaths are never kept. Do not blackmail me, Lord God, and do not try to make a saint of me. Amen. Then the bugle-blast woke me up.

This time I got up at once, washed and tidied myself as well as I could without soap and comb, and cleaned out the cell; I was full of good resolutions to adapt myself to the new order of things. A tune from a German film haunted me: "A new life is just beginning." It was a stupid film which I had seen a year previously and never given a thought to again. In the night the tune had buzzed in my ear like a tiresome fly, and I couldn't get rid of it. "A new life is just beginning."

At eight the prisoners came out into the courtyard again, and I took up my observation post. By now I seemed to myself to be like some Parisian *petit-bourgeois* who, in shirt-sleeves and with pipe in mouth, leans out of the window to watch the stir and bustle of the market.

Later on I busied myself with the equation of a hyperbola again. The walls of this cell were beautifully white and unsullied, and provided an extensive surface upon which to write. A piece of wire from my bedstead once more served me for pencil.

I also began to scrawl my diary on the wall, but I stuck over it. As long as I was thinking them out, my sentences seemed quite sensible, but no sooner had I begun to scribble them down than I fell as though bewitched into the sentimental penny novelette style. At midday there were beans in oil again. I wondered whether they cooked once for the whole week.

Punctually at one Byron and the consumptive once more appeared in the courtyard, to disappear punctually again at three. I racked my brains wondering what crime they could have committed not to be allowed out with the rest of the prisoners; I decided they must be in a kind of intermediate stage between the solitary confinement in which I was kept and the comparative freedom of the others.

That afternoon a minor catastrophe befell me; my watch stopped. It gave me an awful fright. I thought to myself that if there were no longer any ladder-rungs of hours and minutes on which to cling, I should be bound to sink

beyond hope of salvation into the stupefying sameness of time. But I poked about among the wheels with my iron all-purpose gadget until it went again.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in mathematics, reciting poetry and the Trojan war.

Then once more there was lentil soup and the last post. And once more an electrically lighted night set in.

The next day was Tuesday, February 16th. I had already scratched strokes on the wall so as not to lose count of time according to conventional reckoning.

The first thing that the morning bugle-blast impressed on my consciousness was that it was a week to-day since my arrest. I thought to myself that dates were kept in prison in very much the same way as in the case of newly born infants; first of all the weeks were celebrated, then the months, then the years.

To-day it was the turn of Bible history, then French literature. But these subjects had little attraction for me. I realized with horror that my education consisted chiefly of lacunae, and that the moths had devoured it like old academic robes. I just could not concentrate, or lose myself in a day-dream. The footballers in the courtyard observed no offside rules; they irritated and bored me. The helm of my thoughts no longer responded to my touch. I turned the wheel in vain; it ran free. I killed time by killing flies. In the midst of this occupation I had an attack of Thou-Shalt-Not-Kill feelings; it was like a slight touch of religious mania. All attempts to think rationally hurt me physically, and I had a feeling that all the nerve centres of my brain were inflamed.

The barometer fell and fell. "Change" had long since been passed, the needle had long since travelled through "storm, wind, and rain"; all that was left was dense gloomy fog and depression.

And, to crown all, another sleepless night, which, without

transition, dragged in its wake the next day, the eighth, with its repetition of bugle-calls, oily beans, of still more pitiable and unsuccessful attempts to think, to pull oneself together, to be a thinking being and not a pitiful rag.

On the afternoon of this eighth day I had a feeling that it was impossible to sink any lower. I thought, as one does in one's naïveté, that the stage would soon be reached when madness would set in. Then it occurred to me that Dante had sat chained to a bench in a dark dungeon for four years, unable either to pace to and fro or lie down. For four years, that is, one thousand five hundred days. And *he* did not go mad. So not even the hope of going mad was left.

I tried to keep this example before my eyes; and the fate of Roman slaves and prisoners chained to the galleys; and to take heart from the consoling thought of the relatively "lesser evil". But that is one of the tritest of consolations. It has always infuriated me to hear a mother exhorting a child who refuses to eat its nasty porridge to think of "the poor children who have nothing to eat". There is a degree of misery where all quantitative comparisons cease to mean anything. To tell a man who has had a foot amputated that there are others who have had both feet amputated is not to console him but to jeer at him. Moreover, it occurred to me, an ordinary "lifer" has one advantage; at least he knows that he is not going to be hanged, and so adapts himself. A life sentence is after all a life sentence, and affords a certain psychological minimum in his existence: security and the cessation of fear. One gets used to everything, runs an old saying. Uncertainty is almost as bad as death, says another.

These were monotonous reflections and they went round in my head like a mill-wheel; a threepenny mill-wheel or the cheapest and commonest wood.

Moreover, I had no need to envy the "lifers" much longer. Three days later I received the first official communication from the authorities. I had been condemned

to death, but this sentence might be commuted to life-long imprisonment.

In the midst of all this misery a Messiah appeared at half-past four, in the person of the barber.

During these first few days I was continually being surprised by my own psychological reactions. The unusual conditions in which I was living produced unusual reactions; the whole machinery of my mind functioned according to new laws, completely strange to me. I felt like a driver who thinks he knows his car inside out and then suddenly realizes that it responds to pressure on the accelerator with a swerve and to the application of the brakes by looping the loop. The appearance of the barber, for example, precipitated such an earthquake in my feelings that I literally had to clutch on to the water-tap so as not to fall down. I felt, *horribile dictu*, my eyes grow moist. The barber was reflected through the prisms of the tear-drops in my eyes in all the colours of the rainbow, in a shimmering halo. He was the redeemer who was to save me from every ill. He had come, and all was well again, and the granite blocks of my fears and misery floated off gracefully into the air as though they had been filled with gas.

In the physics of madness a pebble can not only set an avalanche in motion but can also stop it.

The avalanche of my despair melted away into the white flakes of the soft foam with which the barber lathered my cheeks. Ring the bells, ring the bells, I am being shaved; I am back on earth again.

Whilst I was being shaved Don Antonio, the nice warder who had been on duty in the patio the day before, stood by supervising the ceremonial.

He was the first warder to enter into a real conversation

with me; for since I was *incomunicado* it was forbidden to talk to me, and up till now the warders had confined themselves to a few monosyllabic remarks when bringing me my food. The cell was like a vault enclosed in three-fold armour-plating; the three-fold wall of silence, loneliness and fear.

Oh, the immense solace of simple human friendliness! The barber soaped away, Don Antonio sat down and smoked on the bed, and the three-fold wall collapsed like the walls of Jericho. The barber asked me whether the razor scratched. I said that it was a very fine razor. Don Antonio asked me whether I wished to smoke. I said that I would very much like to smoke. The barber shaved away. Don Antonio rolled me a cigarette and lit it for me. Oh, Susanna, oh, Susanna, life is lovely after all!

Every heavy smoker knows that the first cigarette after several days of abstinence produces a feeling of slight tipsiness. I smoked almost without stopping, taking deep, thirsty puffs, and the cell began to rock slightly.

A few minutes later, when the barber had begun to cut my hair, I had gained control of myself sufficiently to enter into a sensible conversation with Don Antonio.

I learned that the inmates of the big patio were actually all political prisoners; partly war prisoners, partly Republicans, Socialists, Communists and Anarchists from Seville and the surrounding villages.

In addition there were a number of Phalangists and Legionaries from Franco's army who had been imprisoned on account of desertion or breaches of discipline. There were even two Moors; I had heard one the evening before gurgling melancholy Arabian songs.

Don Antonio refused to say a word about the lengths of the sentences or discuss the question of the prisoners' trials; but he shrugged his shoulders expressively and I gained the impression that the majority of the prisoners, particularly the peasants, who were suspect because of their views, had not been brought to trial at all.

A few prisoners also had been brought over from Malaga a week previously. But they were no longer there. I asked with understandable interest what had become of them.

"*Se marcharon*" (they have gone), said Don Antonio, with a shrug of the shoulders, and he refused to say anything more on this point.

I asked whether there were any criminals in the prison.

"A few," said Don Antonio. "They exercise over there in the 'beautiful patio'." The "beautiful patio" was in the other wing; it was smaller, and there were flowers, trees and benches in it. Formerly—by formerly Don Antonio always meant the time of the Republic—formerly the beautiful patio had been for political prisoners, and the big or ordinary one for criminals. Now things had been reversed.

The riddle of the national cockade worn by the political prisoners was also cleared up. Cockades were sewn on to the shirts of those prisoners who performed some particular function, like Angelito, the orderly, the librarian, etc. I asked what sort of curious bird Angelito was. Don Antonio said he was a petty criminal; he had beaten his mother-in-law with a leather strap; luckily she had not died, but had only been paralysed on one side.

Finally I asked Don Antonio what he thought of my own personal prospects. But this was the third point on which Don Antonio refused to be drawn.

On parting I enumerated my usual list of requests, from money to pencil, from Consul to soap. He promised, as all the other warders had promised, to see to everything promptly; the result was exactly the same as in the case of all the others. This combination of utter good nature and utter unreliability in the Spaniards again and again had the effect on me of some natural phenomenon. "*Mañana, mañana*" (to-morrow, to-morrow) they said, with the most enchanting smile, or "*ahora, ahora*" (in a moment, in a moment). Both these expressions are used synonymously, and mean, according to the context: "Some

time; perhaps; we must hope for the best; Allah is great; there's no need to despair."

On departing, Don Antonio gave me ten cigarettes and the barber the broken half of an old greasy comb and a bit of soap. These were simply terrific presents. My standard of life was beginning to rise perceptibly.

On the afternoon of this Wednesday and the morning of the Thursday that followed it the fine weather persisted. I gave myself up again to my mental pursuits and amused myself by inventing a peripatetic dialogue between Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud on the causes of the Great War. Both wore white togas, spoke in the manner of the disciples of Socrates, and flapped their white drapery excitedly in the midst of a group of admiring young men.

At midday there was potato soup for the first time, with so much red pepper in it that the oil gleamed a bright scarlet. My standard of life was unmistakably rising, and, following the Coué system, I scratched on the wall: "Every day, in every way, things are getting better and better."

That afternoon, however, it rained, and the courtyard remained empty. I missed the usual hubbub and I carried on a desperate windmill struggle against a fresh wave of melancholy.

In the evening there was a sensation. Don Antonio was on duty again, and he asked me, while Angelito was ladling out the lentil soup into my bowl what English prisons were like. I said hastily that I would gladly tell him everything about them if he would stay a while and not bang the door in my face this time. I was avid of every word I was permitted to exchange with a fellow human being. Don Antonio stood leaning against the door somewhat hesitatingly. He said that he had wondered for a long time whether there were baths in every cell in English prisons. I said there were no baths, but hot and cold showers and soap *ad lib.* Don Antonio said that when the war was over

he was going to England to study prison conditions there. I said that he must come and stay with me so that I might have an opportunity of returning his hospitality. He laughed and went off. I begged him to stay a while, but once more he banged the door in my face.

But these few trifling words had the effect of a stimulating drug, the effect of which lasted several hours.

And then the last post sounded again, and it was time to take off one's shoes, lie down fully dressed on the bed and, the electric light burning above one's head, to play "catch-as-catch-can" with sleep, which is, after all, one way of passing the time.

And I blessed the wisdom of the Lord, who has so ordered the world that the day has only twenty-four hours and not twenty-five or thirty.

VI

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, began, like all other days, with my scratching a fresh mark on my wall calendar. I discovered that a week had gone by since I had been brought to Seville—another "celebration day". Three more days, and I should be able to celebrate the fourteenth day since my arrest. The little marks on the wall displayed a dangerous tendency to increase by division like bacilli on a dung-heap. And still I had not been brought up for trial, had not even been informed officially of the reason for my arrest. Bolín, who had arrested me, had presumably long since returned to the Salamanca headquarters, and Queipo de Llano, to whose paternal care he had handed me over, did not seem to be taking an exactly lively interest in me.

I worked out the most varying theories as to what was going on behind the scenes. The most likely explanation seemed to me that Queipo had sent for my dossier and that some authority or other was at the moment too busy to translate my book and my articles, amongst them my inter-

view with Queipo himself, which were to constitute the main body of the evidence against me. If this were the case, then I had no cause to rejoice at the time thus gained.

On the other hand I was convinced that protests must by now have been got going on my behalf. The "News Chronicle" would protest, the journalists' associations would protest, and quite a nice little scandal would be raised. But what did Franco care about protests? Not a brass farthing. It had become a tradition during the last few years that dictators acted and democracies protested, a division of labour which seemed to please everybody.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, however, the unfriendly powers in whose hands my fate lay sent their first deputation to me. They employed, oddly enough, as official emissary, not a military examiner or any other dignitary of that kind, but a smiling young lady. She wore a well-fitting Phalangist uniform, was called Helena, like the goddess who kindled the Trojan war, and acted on the side as correspondent of the American Hearst Press.

She arrived in the company of two equally elegant young officers.

It was, as I have said, on the stroke of five that the key rattled in the lock, the door swung open and the three of them strode into my cell. They greeted me with extreme politeness and then looked round, somewhat at a loss, for something to sit upon.

The sudden opening of his cell door at a time other than the regular feeding time is always a shock to a prisoner. For the first few moments I was thrown into such confusion by the sight of the three uniformed figures that I murmured some idiotic kind of apology at being unable to offer the young lady anything better to sit on than my iron bedstead. But she only smiled—a rather charming smile it seemed to me—and asked if my name were Koestler, and whether I spoke English. To both questions I replied in the affirmative.

Then she asked me whether I were a Communist. To this I had to reply in the negative.

"But you are a Red, aren't you?"

I said that I was in sympathy with the Valencia Government, but did not belong to any party.

The young lady asked me whether I was aware what would be the consequence of my activities.

I said that I was not.

"Well," she said, "it means death."

She spoke with an American twang, drawling out the vowel sound in "death" so that it sounded like "dea-ea-h-th", and watched the effect.

I asked why.

Because, she said, I was supposed to be a spy.

I said that I was not, and that I had never heard of a spy who signed articles and a book attacking one side in a war and then afterwards went into the territory of that side with his passport in his pocket.

She said that the authorities would investigate that point, but that in the meantime General Franco had been asked by the "News Chronicle" and by Mr. Hearst of New York to spare my life; that she happened to be the correspondent of the Hearst Press in Spain, and that General Franco had said that I would be condemned to death, but that he might possibly grant a commutation of my sentence.

I asked her what exactly she meant by a commutation.

"Well, lifelong imprisonment. But there is always hope of an amnesty, you know," she said, with her charming smile.

A perfect cyclone of thoughts rushed through my head. First of all I had had a set of dirty postcards to thank for my life, and now here was Randolph Hearst himself as my second saviour—my guardian angels seemed to be a somewhat poor lot. And then, what was the significance of that fateful phrase, "might possibly grant a commutation"?

But I had not much time for reflection. The young lady

on my bed asked me in charming conversational tones if I would like to make a statement to her paper with regard to my feelings towards General Franco.

I was pretty bewildered by all this, but not so bewildered as not to perceive the fateful connection between this question and that "might possibly" of General Franco's. This was something like a Biblical temptation, although Satan was presenting himself in the smiling mask of a young woman journalist; and at that moment—after all those hellish days of waiting for torture and death—I had not the moral strength to resist.

So I said that although I did not know Franco personally I had a feeling that he must be a man of humanitarian outlook whom I could trust implicitly. The young lady wrote this down, seemingly very pleased, and asked me to sign it.

I took the pen, and then I realized that I was about to sign my own moral death sentence, and that this sentence no one could commute. So I crossed out what she had written and dictated another statement, which ran:

"I do not know General Franco personally, nor he me; and so, if he grants me a commutation of my sentence I can only suppose that it is mainly out of political considerations.

Nevertheless, I could not but be personally grateful to him, just as any man is grateful to another who saves his life. But I believe in the Socialist conception of the future of humanity, and shall never cease to believe in it."

This statement I signed.

The temptation of Satan had been resisted, and I patted myself inwardly on the back and rejoiced at having a clear head once more. I had good need of it too, for Miss Helena's next question was what did I actually mean by a "Socialist conception of the future of humanity"?

This question called for an academic dissertation, and I

was about to launch forth on one. But the three Phalangists were hardly a sympathetic audience for my passionate rhetorical efforts. The young lady cut me short and suggested the lapidary formula:

"Believes in Socialism to give workers chance."

She said Americans understood things the better the more briefly they were put.

In God's name, I said, Amen.

Then she asked me how I could account for the fact that I had stayed in Malaga after the Reds had gone.

I tried to explain with, as far as possible, American brevity, the whole complicated story of Sir Peter, Alfredo's car, and the whole apocalyptic atmosphere in Malaga. I myself felt that it did not sound very convincing.

But she was courteous enough not to express any doubts, and I asked her what had happened to Sir Peter.

She told me that he too was in prison. This was untrue; Sir Peter had by this time long since been on English soil and was moving heaven and earth to secure my release. But that was precisely what I was not to be told.

On leaving, my fellow-journalist of the Hearst Press further told me that she worked with Captain Bolin in the Press and Propaganda Department at the Salamanca headquarters, that Madrid was on the point of falling, and that she would try to arrange for me to be moved to a better prison. I said that I should be most grateful to her if she could do this, for General Queipo and I had a long-standing aversion to each other.

"Thank you so-o-o much," she said. The officers saluted once again with extreme politeness, and off went the three of them; and I sank exhausted on to my bed, which now smelt most unwontedly of some Parisian perfume.

I was incapable of collecting my thoughts. Death sentence, life-long imprisonment, the correspondent of the Hearst Press, the Propaganda Department, the Phalangist uniform and the perfume were altogether too much for my poor head.

The visit of the correspondent of the Hearst Press acting on behalf of the Propaganda Department—or should I say the visit of the female Phalangist acting on behalf of the Hearst Press—to whose competence I pay full tribute—took place on February 19th. It was the only official contact I had, during the course of three months, with the authorities who held me prisoner. The first and last official examination of me by an examining magistrate took place on May 8th, four days before my release.

The day after this visit I felt enormous relief. The second day I remembered the fateful “might possibly”; the third day it became an obsession.

Doubt is a bacillus that eats slowly but surely into the brain; the patient positively feels the dirty little beast grazing on his grey matter. But in every long-drawn-out illness the patient eventually reaches a stage in which he has, it is true, not reconciled himself to the pain, but has succeeded in arriving at a *modus vivendi* with his illness; he knows how to behave when the attack comes on. Mental misery likewise comes on in spasms; it is only in bad novels that people are in a permanent state of unhappiness for the whole twenty-four hours of the day. The real man spends at least twelve hours in eating, drinking, working and other distractions that banish his misery into the dungeons of his consciousness. From there the agony makes itself heard only as a muffled bass in the symphony of the daily round and produces a vague feeling of uneasiness. Uneasiness and not unhappiness is the most common form of human suffering. Until an acute attack comes on; and then one simply takes a pill.

Every man needs a different pill to help him to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with his misery. Job cursed God when his sores festered; the prisoners in Malaga sang the International. I,

too, had my pills, a whole collection of various sorts of them, from the equation of a hyperbola and “my fill of days” to every kind of synthetic product of the spiritual pharmacy.

In other words, the human spirit is able to call upon certain aids of which, in normal circumstances, it has no knowledge, and the existence of which it only discovers in itself in abnormal circumstances. They act, according to the particular case, either as merciful narcotics or ecstatic stimulants. Anyone who has ever gone in peril of his life knows that dream-like feeling of having his consciousness split in two, so that with one half of it he observes himself with comparative coolness and aloofness, as though observing a stranger. This partial paralysis of the consciousness is one form of narcotic; there are many others. The consciousness sees to it that its complete annihilation is never experienced. It does not divulge the secret of its existence and its decay. No one is allowed to look into the darkness with his eyes open; he is blindfolded beforehand.

This is why situations lived through are never so bad in reality as in imagination. Nature sees to it that trees do not grow beyond a certain height, not even the trees of suffering.

I actually had no fear of the moment of execution; but only feared the fear that would precede that moment. The oily voice was far more terrible to me than the crack of the rifles which it conjured up.

The days went by.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

It was on Friday that I had received the visitors who brought the momentous news; from then to the next Friday the entries in my prison calendar are blank—no memorable event took place.

By memorable events are understood, in the murky bell-jar of prison, things like getting potato soup instead of

bean soup for the midday meal, a few privately exchanged words with the warder or the orderly, a cigarette given one by the warder, a spider in the window, or a bug in the bed. These are breath-taking experiences, they employ and stimulate the free-running mechanism of thought for hours at a time. They are substitutes for visits to the movies, making love, reading the newspapers and the cares of daily life. Storms in teacups are, for those whose horizon extends no farther than the rim of the cup, quite as real as storms at sea.

The seven blank spaces on my calendar represented, then, the most absolute degree of uneventfulness imaginable. Nothing, not the least thing, not the least fraction of the least thing, happened which might cause the faintest breath of air to stir the idle sails of the windmill of time. Just as the bear, hibernating, feeds on his own fat, so did I, in my head, feed from the dishes of thirty years of reading, learning and living. But my brain was drained dry and the few drops of thought that I squeezed out of it were pale, like thrice-brewed tea.

It is a peculiar mechanism, the brain; it manufactures only if a market through the medium of the word or the pen is assured it beforehand. If there is no demand for its products, it goes on strike. One can fool it for a time by pretending to oneself to be the public; but it soon sees through the swindle. One's own ego is by no means an entertaining companion. After six weeks of solitary confinement I was so sick of myself that I only spoke to myself in formal terms and addressed myself as "Sir".

The astonishing thing, the puzzling thing, the consoling thing about this time was that it passed. I am speaking the plain unvarnished truth when I say that I did not know how. I tried to catch it in the act. I lay in wait for it, I riveted my eyes on the second hand of my watch, resolved to think of nothing else but pure time. I held it like the simpleton in the fable who thought that to catch a bird you had to put salt on its tail. I stared at the second hand for minutes on end, for quarters of an hour on end, until my eyes

watered with the effort of concentration and a kind of trance-like stupor set in—and what I did not know afterwards was how long a time I had been observing its passing.

Time crawled through this desert of uneventfulness as though paralysed in both feet. I have said that the astonishing and consoling thing was that in this pitiable state it should pass at all. But there was something that was more astonishing, that positively bordered on the miraculous, and that was that this time, these interminable hours, days and weeks, passed *more swiftly* than a period of time has ever passed for me before. . . .

I was conscious of this paradox whenever I scratched a fresh mark on the white plaster of the wall, and with a particular shock of astonishment when I drew a circle round the marks to celebrate the passage of the weeks and, later, the months. What, another week, a whole month, a whole quarter of a year? Didn't it seem only like yesterday that this cell door had banged to behind me for the first time?

Everyone is familiar with these paradoxes of time. It seems that those days which, owing to their uneventfulness and dreariness, seem longest, shrink to nothing as soon as they have become the past, precisely because of their uneventfulness. In the perspective of the past they have no extension, no volume, no specific gravity; they become geometric points, a diminishing vacuum, nothing. The greater the sum of blank days, the lighter their weight in the memory. The time that, when it is the present, passes most slowly, passes swiftest of all in the memory.

And the converse is also true. When events pile one upon the other and time gallops—then and only then is the span of time traversed cherished in all its details in the memory. The periods that pass most swiftly are in the memory the slowest. It is in flight that time leaves behind the most visible traces.

It is truly a strange will-o'-the-wisp, this time. If we experience time of such a quality that we have to look at our watch, to count the minutes, as soon as its existence is

brought to our consciousness—we may be sure that it will be extinguished in the memory. The only time that is unforgettable is that time during which one forgets that time exists. Only that time is fruitful which remains chaste and unsullied by the touch of consciousness. . . .

Speculating on the subject of time was one of my favourite nostrums, and at times the only remedy that could help me to while it away. There was a bizarre, bitter, ironical consolation in the knowledge that these interminable, torturing hours, as soon as they had ceased to be the present, would shrink to nothing, like an indiarubber pig, when the air escapes from it with a squeak. It was a constant swimming against the stream; the agony lifted as it converted itself into the past; one remained always at the same spot in the river, but all that was floating downstream was vanquished and overcome.

This time problem is the main problem of existence for every prisoner. That is why I dwell on it at such length, although it brings my narrative to a standstill. My case is like that of the motorist who breaks his journey to examine the engine of the car that is to take him on further. And it is the problem not only of the prisoner, but of everyone who exists in unnatural, confined, hermetically sealed conditions; in sanatoria, in the colonies. Often, very often, I found myself thinking of the "everlasting soup" in Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain", and the marvellous reflections on Time indulged in by his young hero in the hermetically-sealed and isolated world of a sanatorium for consumptives; he, too, a captive, held prisoner not by social, but by biological chaos.

. . . Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

" . . . The wind goeth towards the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full. . . ."

While I was living down the eight blank days on my calendar and speculating upon time, out in the courtyard outside my window, the courtyard of the leap-froggers and football-players, thirty-seven men were shot.

But I did not know this at the time.

There were one or two individuals whom, when they entered the courtyard in the morning, my eyes greeted as old acquaintances. One was the old grandpapa who, rain or shine, always wore his fine woolly coat and paced up and down in the shadow of the wall with a book in his hand which he never read. Another was a twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy, dirty and delightful, like all Mediterranean children; his companions called him *cariño*, darling. Then there was Pedro, a semi-imbecile who played the part of the village idiot; the others would cuff him, trip him up and even spit at him—drawing-room manners were at a discount in the patio. Pedro seemed to enjoy this treatment; he would fall clownishly on all fours, and, highly flattered, wipe the spittle from his face—until quite suddenly and unexpectedly he would fly into a temper, chase his tormentors, shake his fist at them and let forth a volley of abuse. The first time I saw this little scene it revolted me; then I too, like the others, came to welcome it as a diversion.

In the very first few days after my arrival in Seville I had been particularly struck by one of the prisoners—a thick-set man with a squint who wore a foreign-looking pullover with the red-yellow-red stripe of an official sewn on to it. He walked about with a certain air of condescension amongst the peasants in their faded linen smocks, and associated for the most part with the "dandies". I tried to guess his profession, and decided that he must be a professional boxer. He was the librarian. I realised this a few days later when I saw him handing out books to the others in the patio.

All my efforts to get something to read had hitherto failed.

Nevertheless, with dogged persistence, three times a day, at meal times, I pegged away at my list of requests, which was now headed by the request for a book. The warders responded in various ways; one with indifference, another with a hypocritical "*mañana*", or "*ahora*", a third by slamming the door; the net result was always the same.

Then I began to make signs to the fat boxer outside. On the average he came past my window three times every morning and three times every afternoon during his perambulations; I lay in wait for hours for this moment. At last, after nine or ten days, I succeeded; he looked across at me and nodded his head almost imperceptibly to signify that he had grasped what I wanted.

I waited in a state of excitement the whole afternoon for his appearance in my cell. I speculated greedily as to what would be the first book he would bring me. I waited until the evening and then all the next day, continuing to make signs which he either did not see or refused to see, and then waited another whole day. At last, on Saturday, February 27th, when I had given up all hope, my lucky moment arrived. During the midday meal the fat librarian came down the corridor past the open door of my cell.

I called out to him, and in my agitation spilt my soup at Angelkin's feet. The librarian stood irresolutely in the corridor, but I was in luck, for one of the nice warders happened to be on duty and he signified that he had no objection to my borrowing a book. The librarian had a whole pile under his arm, and he gave me the top one. It was a Spanish translation of John Stuart Mill's autobiography.

And squeezed under the cover was a half-squashed cigarette.

It was a red-letter day—a real red-letter day. A day that must be celebrated with due ceremony.

I went on eating my beans deliberately, washed my bowl with special care, and put it in the window alcove to dry. Then I sat down on the bed, lit the cigarette and began to read.

I read devoutly and fervently—and very slowly. I could not make out at least a quarter of the words, and, having no dictionary, I had to ponder the meaning of each sentence. But this only increased my enjoyment. I learned to read anew, with a long since forgotten concentration on every sentence, every adjective. I felt like someone who has been bed-ridden and who in learning to walk anew is acutely conscious of the play of his muscles. I fancy the Romans must have read in this fashion when books were written by hand on long parchment rolls; devoutly, sentence by sentence, only a few inches of the roll a day, so as to keep the rest for the morrow. When writers were obliged to use parchment rolls they knew how carefully people read them, and had confidence in their readers. Nowadays readers may have confidence in the writer, but writers have no confidence in the reader.

It was incidentally a particularly happy chance that it was John Stuart Mill's autobiography which lay on the top of the librarian's pile. I have always believed that in the administration of Divine Providence there is a special department entirely occupied in seeing that the right book comes into the hands of a reader at the right moment.

A Hemingway or a Joyce or a Huxley would have had a positively devastating effect at that particular moment. But here I stood at the foot of one of those monumental pillars of the monumental nineteenth century, a man whose life was an outstanding historical example of that kind of creative puritanism, free from crabbed self-complacency, which regards abstemiousness not as an end in itself but as necessary for the attainment of a spiritual object. He was, indeed, a pillar of strength, this old nineteenth century figure; you could walk round him and tap the weatherproof stone with the palm of your hand, your face turned upwards to where he vanished in austere architectural perspectives—a position of the head that is exceedingly good for the mind.

The second book that I was given to read was de Maistre's "Voyage Autour de Mon Quartier", and the first sentence that leaped to my gaze as I turned the pages was the soliloquy of the author, imprisoned in his room, as he surveys his library:

"They have forbidden me to go to and from the town and to move about freely in space; but they have left the entire universe at my disposal; its boundless, infinite space and infinite time are at my service. . . ."

This sentence became pill number one.

The prison library contained about sixteen hundred for the most part very good books. They had been got together in the Republican era, and the new inquisitors had up till now forgotten to carry out a purge. There were even revolutionary pamphlets dating from the years 1930-1931, biographies of Caballero, Azaña and so forth.

This was typical of the whole prison. Everything was still carried on at the old jog-trot—a very Republican, very humane and very Spanish, slovenly jog-trot. Ninety-five per cent of the warders and subordinate officials belonged to the old personnel. They were steeped in the humane routine of the Republic, and their sympathy with the new régime was unlikely to be very great, even though some of them had, willy-nilly, to assume Phalangist uniforms. With three exceptions, all the warders were kindly and humane, some of them even unusually nice—in so far as their instructions would allow. And sometimes they would even disregard their instructions.

Somehow this vast prison made one think of the realm of the Sleeping Beauty in the midst of the turmoil of war. I heard later that it sometimes happened that, twenty-four hours before his execution, a prisoner would be sent up for a medical examination, and be ordered a milk-diet because of suspected appendicitis. The inertia of routine showed itself to be more

powerful than the forces of the present; tradition contemptuously outlived death. It was an extremely humane, positively comfortable prison—picnics were held by the open gravesides.

All this was true of the warders and subordinates, who were in close and constant contact with the prisoners without having any say as to their fate. The higher you went in the hierarchy the more bleak, the more cold the atmosphere. To Spanish Generals no man below the rank of sergeant is a human being. For us inhumanity began with the sergeant.

In prison the sergeant is represented by the "*jefe de servicio*", the head warder. For my first acquaintanceship with a head warder I had to thank, symbolically enough, a defect in the flushing of the W.C.

This was on the 28th, the day after I had been given my first book.

In the morning the cistern began to leak. I was too absorbed in John Stuart Mill to bother much about it. By the time the midday soup arrived the whole cell was wet. I drew the warder's attention to this and he promised—*ahora, ahora*—to send the *fontanero*, the plumber, along. In the meantime I was to mop the flags with the floorcloth.

I did this, and then went back to John Stuart Mill. The plumber did not come, of course. By dusk the water was several millimetres deep on the cell-floor and the cistern was leaking worse than ever. By the time the evening soup arrived I no longer had any need to draw the warder's attention to the state of affairs; he could see the extent of the damage for himself. "*Ahora*," he said kindly, "I'll send the *fontanero* along." But in the meantime I was to mop the cell with the floor-cloth so that the water did not overflow into the corridor.

I did this, cursing, but by now a steady rivulet of water was pouring from the cistern and by the second bugle-call the water was almost ankle-deep. Since the plumber had still not come, I began to drum furiously on the door—a proceeding which is forbidden after the second bugle-call.

After some time of persistent drumming the door flew open and in stormed the *jefe de servicio*, followed by a trembling Angelito.

The *jefe* was short and fat; he filled his Phalangist uniform to bursting-point and yet it was crinkled, like the skin of a badly-filled sausage. He had a scar on his face that began at the nose and reached to the right ear, half of which was missing. He was not a prepossessing sight. He roared until the walls shook.

"What have you been up to here?" he thundered.

I said that the cistern was to blame, and not I.

"You're only to speak when you are spoken to," he roared. "And when I come in, you've got to stand to attention over there by the wall."

I waded over to the wall and stood to attention. The *jefe* flung his cigarette-end irately on to the floor. The stump was peacefully swirled out of the door by the current.

"Mop the floor," bellowed the *jefe*.

I said that I had mopped the floor three times already (it was only twice), but that it had been of no use.

The *jefe* said that if he ordered it I had got to mop the floor six, ten, or twenty times, to mop it all day and all night; he brandished his rubber truncheon under my nose and promised to order me a "*flagelación*" the next day. Then, spitting into the flood, he strode out, banging the door behind him.

I set about drying the floor once more. Before I had finished the door opened and in came Don Ramón, one of the nicest of the warders, followed by the plumber. He put his finger to his lips and grinned. I realised that he had smuggled in the plumber after the "last post" against the *jefe's* orders and the prison regulations.

This incident had given me my first introduction to the ruling class of the prison. Thanks to the happy ending,

however, it had taught me a useful lesson. I reflected that the *fontanero* would never have come if I had not kicked up a row; consequently, I thought to myself, I shall get my list of requests—from Consul to cigarettes—attended to soonest if I make a fuss. I waited one more day, reciting my list with particular importunity at each meal-time—and then, finding that I was again fobbed off with "*mañana*" and "*ahora*", on Tuesday, the 2nd March, I began my first hunger-strike.

The effect was beyond all expectation immediate.

When, in the morning, Don Ramón appeared with Angelito and the vat of coffee, I announced that I did not want anything. Don Ramón asked me if I had a stomach-ache. I said that I wished to speak to the Governor, and that I refused to touch any food until he arrived.

Don Ramón seemed very surprised, and Angelito grinned. They went away without a word.

At midday I again refused food. A different warder was on duty; he said nothing, but simply banged the door and went away. The matter must therefore already have got round. This seemed a favourable omen.

At six o'clock in the evening the door flew open and a solemn procession entered my cell. At the head the Governor, then the head warder, then Angelito, and finally one of the "dandies".

The Governor was a meagre, not unkindly little man. I learned later that he belonged to the old staff. They had not dared to sack him, for his knowledge of the workings of the prison had made him indispensable, but they had stuck a Phalangist officer right under his nose and had limited his sphere of action to purely technical matters.

The Governor looked at me for a while and then asked what was the matter with me, at the same time signing to the "dandy" to act as interpreter. I said that I knew enough Spanish to make myself understood, but he replied that he preferred to have an interpreter, so that he might get everything quite clear.

The little man inspired confidence. I briefly told him my case and came out with my list of requests. He said that he had to abide by his orders; I was "*incomunicado*" and might therefore neither write letters nor get in touch with the Consul. He had no say, either, he said, as to my future fate. But he would try to get my confiscated money returned to me and would try to see that I got those purely technical alleviations that lay within his power. In return I was to undertake to eat again.

I did this, and the procession marched out. But I button-holed the "dandy" in the doorway, and managed to cadge a one-peseta voucher from him to buy cigarettes.

I waited impatiently to see whether the Governor would keep his word, or whether he too was one of the "*mañana*" type.

But the very next morning in came Angelito, accompanied by Don Ramón, with an armful of the most fabulous treasures. He laid them all out on the bed, and the two of them stood by with benevolent expressions on their faces as though about to distribute presents from a Christmas tree. I was positively dazzled, and I examined each object minutely and lovingly. There were in all:

a stump of pencil,
five sheets of white paper,
a piece of soap,
a face-towel,
a shirt.

Don Ramón explained that the paper and pencil were not for writing letters, but for "composing", for the Governor thought that if I were allowed to "compose" again it would "lighten my heart". Then he added, with a wink, that since everything that I wrote might be taken away at any time to be examined, I had better write only "nice things".

I promised to write only nice things. Once more I had that exalted feeling of overwhelming, boundless joy that I had had when the barber had come, and when I had been given my first book.

I debated with myself which luxury I should sample first, the pencil or the soap. The soap won; I scrubbed myself from top to toe, put on the new shirt, washed out the old one and laid it in the window alcove to dry.

Then it was the turn of the pencil.

My diary dates from this day onwards. Bearing in mind the fact that I was "to write only nice things" I worded it in the style of the "Uncle-Bertie-seriously-ill-inform-Auntie" telegram. If at night ten prisoners were shot, I wrote: "Woke at ten, bad dreams."

My diary of the last days of Malaga, which was confiscated on my arrest, I reconstructed from memory, as also the events of the first three weeks after my arrest.¹

By a particularly happy accident I managed to smuggle this diary out of prison when I was released. The following entries are for the most part unchanged; I have simply translated the flowery language back to normal speech and in places amplified the entries.

VII

Wednesday, March 3rd.

Morning received pencil, paper, soap, towel, shirt. If I only had a toothbrush I should almost be a human being again.

At breakfast gave Angelito the dandy's voucher for one peseta to get me eight packets "Hebras" cigarettes and four boxes matches from canteen. He said prison canteen

¹ Out of a sense of pedantry I should mention here that one or two dates in the series of articles which I published after my release in the "News Chronicle", are not quite correct. The luggage containing my diary was not at hand at the moment, and I therefore got the dates of certain events mixed up. The accounts of the events themselves were in no way affected by this.