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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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.

not open till eleven. Spent morning copying out extracts from Mill. Write almost microscopically to save paper.

Midday still no cigarettes. Angelito off duty, vanished, and with him the peseta.

Read all afternoon. When evening soup came got cigarettes. Angel says no more cheap "Hebras" in canteen; brought one packet "Especiales", twenty for 80 cmos., one box of matches for 5 cmos. Didn't want to return vouchers for remaining 15 cmos., said a little *propina* (tip) was due to him on every purchase. Told him no tip till I got back my confiscated money. Answered: "You can wait till you're blue in the face," but finally forked out the 15 cmos.

Thursday, March 4th.

Morning finished John Stuart Mill. Tried to signal to librarian through window that wanted book changed, but no use.

Am rationing cigarettes. Yesterday smoked four, night two, twelve left—want to make them last three days. Perhaps by then my money will come.

Evening.

Signalled librarian all afternoon. No use. At seven taken to prison office. Secretary showed me telegram from Salamanca to Governor:

> "Governor provincial prison Seville stop money personal effects prisoner Koestler with Colonel Fuster General Staff Second Division Seville stop Bolín"

So Bolín returned to Salamanca? This is reassuring.

Secretary informs me Governor has written to Colonel Fuster requesting him to send my money and luggage to prison.

Long live the Governor.

On way back from office passed Cell 44. Card with Caballero's name still there, but 42 and 43 no longer have cards. Wonder what has happened to inmates.

Whole day signalled librarian. No use. Money and luggage not yet arrived. Midday fish soup with boiled lettuce leaves. Seven cigarettes left.

Saturday, March 6th.

Morning tried to signal librarian. No use. Got into a rage and chain-smoked all seven cigarettes. Money and luggage not arrived.

Midday handed over to Angelito last 15 cmo. voucher. At five he brought one cigar at 10 cmo. and one box matches. Smoked three puffs, then put it out. Five puffs after supper. Still have almost half left. To-morrow is Sunday, so money *can't* come.

Sunday, March 7th.

Morning Mass in the gallery outside my cell. Watched through spy-hole prisoners marching along four abreast. During Mass three or four faces remained in my field of vision. All peasants; seemed to have little interest in the service. Then sermon; i.e., front-line news rather than sermon. Could only understand about half. Parson threatened all "Reds" with eternal damnation. Said still time to recant. Observed effect on those in my field of vision. Listeners exchanged cigarettes, picked their noses, spat discreetly on floor.

On march back priest passed for a second through my field of vision. Short, swarthy, greasy fellow, type of army padre in Great War.

Afternoon librarian arrived unexpectedly, brought De Maistre's "Voyage autour de mon Quartier". In my delight smoked rest of cigar, kept stump to chew tobacco. Chewing quite good substitute.

Monday, March 8th.

Such craving to smoke that I ate up entire cigar-stump.

Three fantastic new arrivals in patio. They are respectably-dressed lawyers, I imagine, or doctors or something —but all three have long black beards and are deathly pale, literally as white as a sheet. Embraced several other prisoners on entering courtyard; all three wept. Imagine must have been long time in solitary confinement and were being let out in patio for first time. I suppose I must look just as fantastic—to-morrow whole month of isolation up.

Asked warder midday if I might write to Governor requesting him to press for my money and luggage. Warder said Governor was taken to hospital yesterday for serious operation. Advised me not to write to his substitute.

Given up all hope of getting back things. Is better, too. Hoping means waiting, and waiting makes one nervy.

Wednesday, March 10th.

Yesterday first month of imprisonment over. Am incapable of visualising future at all concretely, despite constant speculation and forging plans. But all plans are somehow dreamlike, unreal. All thought more and more takes form of day-dreaming. Whenever cell door opens fresh air from the corridor makes me dizzy and I have to hold on to the table. If a warder addresses a word to me I grow hoarse with excitement.

Finished De Maistre overnight; ever since early morning signalled vainly again at window. Librarian seems purposely to avoid looking over here, perhaps because too lazy to bring a book. Surely he must have enough imagination to realize what a book means to a man in solitary confinement. I had imagined more solidarity among political prisoners.

Out in the patio they are starting to build a lavatory. They are building with bricks, right in the middle.

Have awful cravings for tobacco. Believe everything would be bearable if I had a cigarette. Tried to cadge one from Angel at supper-time. Says he has none, while all the time his pocket is full of them. But he calls me "Arturito" and at every opportunity pats me affectionately on the back.

Thursday, March 11th.

When the prisoners are led out into the patio and when they come back, they march four abreast along the corridor past my cell. They walk slowly, with shuffling steps; most of them wear felt slippers or bast sandals; I stand at my spy-hole and follow the procession with my eyes, as one face after another comes within my field of vision. All have a habit of reading out the name-cards on the cell doors as they pass. Often I hear my name spelled out in undertones fifteen or twenty times in succession: "Ar-tu-ro-ko-est-ler". Sometimes one of them will read the rest, too: "*In-co-mu-ni-ca-do. O-jo*". "*O-jo*" means: "keep an eye on him". Sometimes, when I am absorbed in reading or lost in a reverie, the sudden murmuring of my name seems to come from a chorus of ghosts.

To-day midday, as they came in for siesta, someone threw a piece of paper into my cell as if in fun. . . .

London, Autumn, 1937.

It was a piece of brown cigarette paper screwed up into a ball. Unfolding it, I read the following lines:

"*Comrade, we know that you are here and that you are a friend of the Spanish Republic. You have been condemned to death; but they will not shoot you. They are much too afraid of the new King of England. They will only kill us—the poor and humble (los pobres y humildes).*

"*Yesterday again they shot seventeen in the cemetery. In our cell, where there were once 100 there are now only 73. Dear comrade foreigner, we three are also condemned to death, and they will shoot us to-night or to-morrow. But you may survive and if*

you ever come out you must tell the world all about those who kill us because we want liberty and no Hitler.

"The victorious troops of our Government have conquered Toledo and have also got Oviedo, Vitoria and Badajoz. And soon they will be here, and will carry us victoriously through the streets. Further letters will follow this one. Courage. We love you.

"THREE REPUBLICAN MILITIAMEN."

No further letters followed. I learned later that two of the men were shot that very night, and the third, whose sentence was commuted, was sentenced to thirty years penal servitude—the Spanish equivalent to a life term.

I had to learn that letter by heart. It has literally become a part of my body, for half an hour after I received it my cell was visited by the guard of inspection. I had no time to tear up the note, and so was obliged to swallow it.

Friday, March 12th.

Morning librarian. Brought Agatha Christie's "Muerte en las Nubes" (Death in the Clouds). An old usuress is bumped off in an aeroplane with a poisoned Indian blow-pipe. . . .

Out in the patio the poor and humble are still playing football and leapfrog. Impossible to discover if any are missing, and which.

My paper is coming to an end; am writing so small that my eyes water.

Saturday, March 13th.

Yesterday evening one of the imprisoned Moors sang again. The song consisted of two words, repeated over and over again: "Ya la-ee-lay—ya la-ee-lay"—Oh night! I have often heard it in Syria and Irak, the camel-drivers sing it as they trot behind their beasts at night. Always the same two words, plaintively drawn out.

Then I had a visit from a little black cat. She leaped up on to my window-sill from the courtyard. Should have loved to have her in my cell, but she couldn't get in because of the wire netting, and I couldn't even stroke her. She went off in disappointment and sprang on to the next window-sill—No. 42. Apparently she found the night too cold and wanted to find a cosy hiding-place. She could get in nowhere and wailed half the night like a baby. She must have thought the people living in this house very unfriendly to stretch queer wire netting over their windows expressly to prevent little cats from climbing in.

To-day the little black cat was in patio the whole day long, and another, a white one. Everyone was kind to them —much kinder than to poor Pedro, our village idiot. He flew into one of his rages again.

Afternoon pouring rain, courtyard empty.

Evening. Still raining. Large puddles have formed in the courtyard, almost ponds.

To-day four weeks since my arrival here.

Sunday, March 14th.

Again unable to sleep. Got up about one and looked out into the courtyard. The rain had stopped, the stars were reflected in the black puddles. It was so still that I could hear frogs croaking—from somewhere outside probably. This gave me the illusion of being in open country.

Morning, Mass again, but this time no sermon. Perhaps news from front is unfavourable and divine inspiration absent. I wonder what's happening in the world outside. Sometimes I think perhaps the world war has already broken out.

My socks are completely done for.

Midday new warder; a bull-dog with brutal, fleshy features. Has a striking likeness to Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh in "Mutiny on the Bounty".

Signalled to librarian all day. No good.

This afternoon was suddenly transferred to next cell,

No. 40. Was not told why. Fittings precisely the same, only the view of the courtyard slightly different. Feel strange and ill-at-ease in the new cell. Miss familiar scratches on the wall.

Monday, March 15th.

Morning librarian. Brought Stevenson's "The Adventures of David Balfour" and five fresh sheets of paper. Tried to borrow a peseta from him; but he said he had nothing himself. Gave me a cigarette—the first for days. Smoking first made me drunk, then sea-sick.

Midday they forgot to bring me food, perhaps because in new cell. Drummed on the door till fists ached; finally at four got a bowl of beans, not from the big vat, but straight in the bowl. Suspected that it had been scraped together from the leavings, but ate it all the same.

Now the bull-dog is on duty all the time. This is very depressing. Hitherto the warders have sometimes said a kind word when bringing meals, such as: "Eat up, Arturito, and get fat," or something of the kind, and the cheering effect of a few words like that would keep me going for an hour or two. The whole mood of a night or an afternoon depends on the tone of voice of Angelito or the warder when they bring me food. I react to friendly or unfriendly waves like a seismograph. Bull-dog has a terribly depressing effect.

Despite all my feelings of self-respect I cannot help looking on the warders as superior beings. The consciousness of being confined acts like a slow poison, transforming the entire character. This is more than a mere psychological change, it is not an inferiority complex—it is, rather, an inevitable natural process. When I was writing my novel about the gladiators I always wondered why the Roman slaves, who were twice, three times as numerous as the freemen, did not turn the tables on their masters. Now it is beginning gradually to dawn on me what the slave mentality really is. I could wish that everyone who talks of mass psychology should experience a year of prison.

I had never believed the saying that a dictatorship or a single person or a minority can maintain its ascendancy by the sword alone. But I had not known how living and real were those atavistic forces that paralyse the majority from within.

I did not know how quickly one comes to regard a privileged stratum of men as beings of a higher biological species and to take their privileges for granted as though they were natural endowments. Don Ramón has the key and I am in the cage; Don Ramón as well as I look upon this state of things as entirely natural and are far from regarding it as in any way an anomaly. And if a crazy agitator were to come and preach to us that all men are equal, we should both laugh him to scorn; Don Ramón with all his heart, I, it is true, only half-heartedly—but all the same I should laugh.

Tuesday, March 16th.

Another week gone. Five weeks since the day of my arrest. And almost four weeks since the state-visit of the Hearst girl.

If Franco had commuted the death sentence surely they would have let me know.

But it's doubtful whether they would also let me know of refusal to commute. In that case does one not hear that one's sentence is confirmed until the last moment?

After all, I was never told of the Malaga court-martial sentence.

Vaguely I recall precedents. Hoffman, for example, Lindbergh baby murderer, learned of the rejection of his appeal only twenty-four hours before going to the chair. Don't know which is preferable. Fancy preferable not to hear until the last moment.

The beastliest thing of all would be not to be informed of the commutation at all; to be left for months or years in uncertainty.

My mind has been following up this train of thought in all its permutations every day for the past week. Only wonder that my spirits are not much lower than they are. If ever I get out they'll all hold up their hands and say how dreadful it must have been. And all the time I shall have a knowing little feeling that, after all, everything was not *so* bad as they imagine. Funny how elastic the limits of what is bearable are.

During the first few days I actually counted my shirt-buttons: reprieved—shot—reprieved—shot. Then I gave it up because an unfavourable result always terrified me.

The joke is one can't really ever completely convince onself that the whole thing is reality and not an obscure game. Who really believes in his own death? I can't help thinking of Sir Peter's telling me that one should disinfect the hypodermic syringe before committing suicide, or else one would get an abscess. I fancy there must be some exact mathematic relationship; one's disbelief in death grows in proportion to its approach.

I don't believe that since the world began a human being has ever died *consciously*.

When Socrates, sitting in the midst of his pupils, reached out for the goblet of hemlock, he must have been at least half convinced that he was merely showing off. He must have seemed to himself to be rather bogus and have secretly wondered at his disciples' taking him so seriously. Of course he knew theoretically that the draining of the goblet would prove fatal; but he must have had a feeling that the whole thing was quite different from what his perfervid, humourless pupils imagined it; that there was some clever dodge behind it all known only to himself.

Of course everyone knows that he must die one day. But to know is one thing, to believe another.

If it were not so, how could I feel as I write this that the whole thing is a theoretical discussion which doesn't concern me in the least?

True, at least once a day there is a short-circuit in my consciousness, and for minutes on end I behold the reality in a full blaze of light, as though illumined by some psychical explosion.

Then no thoughts, no pills avail; only brute fear remains.

But it passes, everything passes; even the minute when one stands before the firing squad and the lead pierces its way through mouth and nose and eyes. And then it is all behind one.

So why get agitated, when it all passes?

Up to now I have kept myself under control and not written about these things. I must not do so again; it agitates me too much.

If only I could somehow get that little cat into the cell.

Wednesday, March 17th.

Have used up almost all the paper in two days. From now on will write things which have no connection with the diary (mathematics and other stuff) on the tiles above the wash-basin. Can be rubbed out later.

Great event in the afternoon; was taken to have a shower-bath. The prison-bathroom is positively luxurious. In addition to showers and baths there is a swimming pool. Of course almost nothing works now. The pool is empty and filthy, the bath-taps are out of order; only two cold showers function. But it was a marvellous feeling to be clean again. Lucky find in the pool: an old bit of toilet-soap.

Caballero still there; cells 41 and 43 are empty, but on No. 42 there is a new Spanish name.

Thursday, March 18th.

The three newcomers in the patio have lost their black beards, and are shaven and already slightly sunburnt. Was glad to see a tall blond young fellow whom I have missed in the patio for some days re-appear. Had feared. . . .

Finished Stevenson, enjoyed it tremendously. Marvellous

how well English authors are translated into Spanish. Now the business of making signals to the *bibliotecario* starts all over again. . . .

Friday, March 19th.

Early this morning asked again to be shaved; but they told me to-day is *fiesta*, holiday. Perhaps it's Good Friday. Easter will come and perhaps I shan't even notice it. . . .

There was a service again this morning and there was good fish soup at midday. We now have soup every Friday and sometimes there is a morsel of meat among the beans or potatoes. At midday the librarian came and suddenly spoke French with a Parisian accent. I was very astonished since hitherto had not remarked foreign accent in his Spanish. Promised me new book for to-morrow, and advised me "*pas se faire de mauvais sang*". I would rather he lent me a peseta. Later a new warder came into my cell; don't know what he wanted; he laughed amiably and went off. A little later the new *jefe de servicio* came—Phalangist uniform, cold, formal. Asked him whether he could not do something about my money. Promised to let me know to-morrow.

Saturday, March 20th.

Angel brought me new book at the request of the librarian; Gabriel Miro's "The Cherries in the Cemetery". Weak stuff, chit-chatty, sentimental. Through the window watched a couple of chaser 'planes leaping and looping in the blue air like young dolphins. Perfect symbol of freedom. Wondered what kind of world I should find if I came out of here in ten years' time without having had papers or news in the meantime. Made rapid survey of changes from nineteen twenty-seven to nineteen thirty-seven; much less difference than one might imagine.

Afternoon saw through spy-hole two black-clad women walking down the corridor, probably on some errand of mercy. One had finely chiselled Velasquez features; it was

pleasant and comforting to see them; it is really strange how cut off one is here from half of humanity.

Late in the evening I heard some newcomers brought in; one cried; but I did not dare to look through the spyhole.

Sunday, March 21st.

Rain, rain, the whole day. The courtyard is a swamp. Someone made a speech before Mass, but I could not understand it. Read and dreamed. I find myself sinking more and more into day dreams—I lose myself for three or four hours on end, pacing up and down, up and down, in a half-dazed state.

Afternoon my watch stopped again. Got a terrible fright, but poked about in the works till it went again.

Monday, March 22nd.

In the night my bed collapsed—I found myself on the ground and dreamed that I had been shot. Confirms the curious phenomenon that the fraction of a second between crash and waking is enough to construct *post factum* an entire story. The sound of the crash is only admitted to consciousness by the time the story has been quickly improvised—till then the crash must wait on the threshold of the consciousness.

. . . Was reminded of my friend A.N., when he was being psycho-analysed. He seemed to me like a wounded horse dragging itself across the bull ring and trailing its entrails behind it. A far from pleasant sight.

Could not go to sleep again. Compared psycho-analysts to sewage-cleaners; the penetrating smell of their profession clings to them even in private life. In their eyes is always a look suggestive of spiritual sewage-cleaning.

Note with displeasure that I am becoming more and more malevolent in my solitude. Sentimental and malevolent.

Got three cigarettes from Angel at midday. Will try to smoke only one a day.

Planes again. Heinkels and Capronis, with white crosses on tail fins. Seven of them.

Evening barber came; offmowed beard with haircutting machine. Asked him why not with razor; he said razor-shaving costs money.

Tuesday, March 23rd.

Actually have two cigarettes left, but no matches. Angel had none on him this morning. Promised me some midday. Only one sheet of paper left.

Wednesday, March 24th.

Smoked last cigarette at twelve. Once more have got obsession of button-counting. In walking up and down take care always to tread in middle of flagstones; if, after pacing up and down five times, haven't touched the line, I shall be reprieved. Often before had attacks of such compulsions, hitherto always managed to fight them down; to-day for first time let myself go.

Six weeks to-day since arrest.

Thursday, March 25th.

Got de Maistre's book for the second time; so read it for fourth time. Nice sentence: "*L'ange distributeur des pensées.*"

At midday the warder surprised me with the fantastic announcement that my money would arrive in the afternoon. He advanced me two cigarettes.

Waited in fever of impatience till evening, telling myself continually it was a mistake—from an involved superstitious belief that if I thought it a mistake, then it would be all right. At last the evening soup came. Asked warder; he laughed, said he had confused me with another English prisoner, who had now got his money. . . .

The other Englishman, it turns out, is the "dandy", who interpreted during the director's visit. He is a merchant from Gibraltar (Spaniard of British nationality), who is

here for smuggling currency. Asked what he was doing with political prisoners. Warder said that in wartime currency manipulation is a political offence.

Friday, March 26th.

Grey day; nervy state, stomach-ache and melancholia.

At midday suddenly heard German spoken in the patio. Couldn't believe my ears. A thick-set, red-cheeked, blond young man in a blue mechanic's overall stood on the white taboo-line, obliquely opposite my window, speaking cautiously into cell 37.

Then he paced up and down and kept calling out sentences in German to number 37 as he passed.

He wanted to write to his Consul, he said, but they wouldn't give him any paper.

He was in a cell with six others, he said, all lousy Spaniards.

They were all Reds here, he said; one had to be very careful.

I couldn't catch the replies from 37. Grasped only that the inmate of 37 must be called Carlos, spoke German and was an old friend of the blond fellow.

I wonder what it all means.

Saturday, March 27th.

Have thrown my socks away; they were no longer wearable. My shirts and pants are only rags now; my suit, which also serves me as pyjamas, looks like a stage costume out of the Beggar's Opera.

At midday offered to sell my watch to warder for hundred cigarettes. He refused. An hour later theatrical sensation—life is a clumsy producer—got first letter from D, and hundred pesetas.

I was really half-crazy with excitement. I embraced Angelito in presence of the warder and the prison secretary, who brought the letter.

Angelito grinned sourly all over his crinkled old woman's face, and was suddenly full of devotion and charm. He gave me ten cigarettes straight away as an advance against future tips; then they all marched off.

The letter is dated March the 8th—so it has taken twenty days to come.

It consists only of five or six cheering sentences, deliberately trivial in order to get past censor. It went in some mysterious way to the British Consul, Malaga, who passed it on to the Military Authorities, who forwarded it to the prison authorities. Whence it is obvious that my wife, despite all efforts, has so far been unable to discover my whereabouts. The last sentence says that I must without fail get a few words in my own handwriting to her via the consulate. From which I gather she certainly doesn't know whether I'm still alive or not.

Drummed on the door and asked whether I might answer the letter. The warder had obviously already received instructions on this point, for he said promptly I might not. I said I wanted to write only one sentence: that I was alive. He said it was impossible.

Then Angelito came to change the hundred peseta note into prison vouchers. He asked fawningly whether he could get me provisions from the canteen. With a lordly gesture I gave him fifteen pesetas, and told him to spend it for me, telling him he could deduct two pesetas for himself straight away.

A positively magical transformation has come about in our relations. Hitherto I have felt myself entirely in Angelito's power and dependent on his moods; now he is a poor devil and I a Señor. Must confess this cheap satisfaction gives me great pleasure.

With the evening soup he brought me a whole basketful of the most fabulous treasures. Cigarettes, matches, tooth-brush, tooth-paste, sardines in oil, sardines in tomato sauce, lettuce, vinegar, oil and salt in a special container, red paprika sausage, dried figs, cheese, Andalusian cakes,

chocolate, tunnyfish in oil and four hard-boiled eggs. My bed was transformed into a delicatessen store. I poured my ration of lentils down the W.C. at one swoop, and devoured these luxuries in any old order—chocolate and sardines, sausage and sweetmeats.

For the first time for six weeks I feel satisfied—satisfied, contented and tired.

If only I could get a word to D!

Sunday, March 28th.

Through Angelito bought socks, writing paper, basket to store my provisions and further delicacies. Day passed chiefly in eating and smoking. Librarian brought three little volumes of humorous sketches by Averchenko.

In the afternoon the blond young German spoke to No. 37 again. Said he had got paper to write to his Consul and promised the invisible Carlos to lend him a peseta.

In the evening the bugler blew a new tune for the last post. An even more melancholy tune.

Monday, March 29th.

All my pleasure in eating and drinking has gone to the devil. Every bite reminds me of the origin of the money and the letter. These attacks of homesickness recur at short intervals and with a violence I've never before experienced. What a wretched sort of creature one is; so long as one's hungry, one has no other desire but to eat and eat, but the moment one is replete the "nobler feelings" suddenly make themselves felt and spoil all one's pleasure. Three days ago a piece of cheese seemed to me the highest of all earthly gifts. Now, the moment I set eyes on a piece of cheese or a sardine tin, the thought of home inevitably occurs to me, and then there's the devil to pay. The good God has definitely put a few wheels too many in our heads.

Afternoon Angelito paid me a private visit and relieved me very willingly of a part of the cause of my misery by

devouring sardines, cheese and chocolate. Afterwards the new *jefe de servicio* came to inform me that Colonel Fuster had not yet answered his inquiry about my confiscated money and luggage. Doesn't interest me now. Asked him when a decision as to my case was to be expected. Said he didn't know; I was an important case, one didn't capture a Red journalist every day. I was highly flattered, but wonder whether it's good or bad to be an important case.

Tuesday, March 30th.

I fancy the *jefe* only visited me because he had heard I'd got some money. It is really curious to see how my prestige has risen overnight and how—grotesquely but truly enough—even my own self-confidence has grown since I've had some money.

Have sixty pesetas left; must begin to be careful.

Dreamed—for second time during imprisonment—that I was free. All rather colourless and disappointing.

Got Mill once more and made extracts whole day.

Wednesday, March 31st.

At midday the warder asked me whether I would like some wine. You bet I would. Got a big beaker full for 45 centimos—about a pint. Learned that every prisoner has the right to buy wine for the midday and evening meals, but no more than this quantity . . . I keep the midday ration for evening, so as to drink both together. Tolerably good white wine, but too little to have any effect. All the same very good to have wine at all.

Thursday, April 1st.

Got Nerval's "Aurelia", Bunin's "Puyodol" and Stevenson's "Olala" at same time. Now I have pretty good food, wine, cigarettes, clean underclothes and good books, no material worries, no bother with publishers, editors and colleagues. Soberly viewed, things are going quite well

with me if it were not for my fear. I fancy that if my state of uncertainty came to an end, and later on I were to receive permission to be with the others in the patio, I should rub along quite well here.

When I read I forget everything for hours on end and am quite contented and really cheerful. Then I remember the letter and all the commiseration expressed in it and I have a feeling that I have a conventional obligation to be unhappy. I picture to myself how my wife must be picturing my situation and my commiseration reflects her commiseration like the echo of an echo. Again and again I catch myself being conscience-stricken at being so cheerful. Custom demands that a man in prison must suffer.

It must be very irksome for the dead to have the living think of them.

Friday, April 2nd.

What pearls one discovers in comparatively unknown books, when, as a result of unwonted circumstances, one forms the unwonted custom of reading attentively!

Gerard de Nerval spent half his life in a mad-house; he wrote the book that I am reading partly between two attacks of madness and partly during an attack; it contains page after page of completely absurd visions and the plot of the story is his own fluctuation between insanity and reason. At one point his condition seems definitely to improve, and his mind grows clear. The result is that he is now kicked out of the asylum and has to wander homeless through the streets of Paris in the cold winter nights, without a penny in his pockets and without an overcoat, instead of pursuing his gay visions in the well-heated mad-house. Half-dead with exhaustion he raves:

"When you win back what people call reason, its loss seems scarcely worth bemoaning."

At thirty-five he was found hanged.

I should like to know whether he hanged himself because,

at the moment when he knotted the rope, he happened to be mad or because he happened to be sane.

The outside world becomes more and more unreal to me.

Sometimes I even think that I was happy before.

I fancy one weaves illusions not only about one's future, but also about one's past.

Saturday, April 3rd.

Got needle and thread, spent the whole day cobbling the tattered remains of my shirt, my pants and my new socks. At midday got fresh lettuce from Angelito wrapped up in a scrap of old newspaper. Saw from it that King of the Belgians had been in Berlin and that Italy had concluded a pact with Jugoslavia; but nothing about the Spanish war. Was astonished and horrified to find how little this news affected me and how much my interest in what is happening outside is waning. And the second month is not yet up.

What interests me much more is that the siesta promenaders—Byron and the consumptive—have got a companion. Lanky, unshaven, dirty, and wears glasses. Has on a short leather coat which looks much too small for him. His whole appearance is somehow comic and pathetic in its awkwardness; have no idea what he can be.

Sunday, April 4th.

Very bad day. Only a few hours relief in sleeping and writing. My heart is giving me so much trouble that at times I feel as though I am suffocating. Whole day in bed in a kind of apathetic coma. The idea of getting up positively alarms me.

Have never been so wretched since Malaga.

Monday, April 5th.

Had heart attack during night, just like the one in 1932. Am very much afraid another one coming on.

London, Autumn, 1937.

The bit about the heart attack was a fabrication. It was a complicated plan for malingering, which I had thought out on the Sunday when the barometer had once more reached its lowest point. The idea was to compel the authorities to transfer me to the prison hospital; in hospital, I thought, it must be a lot easier to find ways and means of getting in touch with the British Consul. To this end I resolved to go on hunger strike, not openly but secretly; to accept all food but surreptitiously to put it down the W.C. until I had become so weak that they would have to fetch a doctor. To the doctor I would then say that I suffered from heart trouble; this is the most difficult of all complaints in connection with which to spot malingering, and, besides, I knew that after ten to fifteen days' of starvation the heart is weakened and the pulse becomes irregular.

Since I had constantly to be on the watch lest my diary should be examined, I took good care to see that its contents tallied with my plan of malingering. I therefore wrote, instead of "fasting" or "starvation"—heart attack. The diary thus acquired a sentimental tone that was bound to tear the heartstrings of the Spanish censor.

The following italicised passages have either been transcribed from my code or are later additions.

I began my fast on Monday, April 5th.

Monday, April 5th (Evening).

Got Sterne's "Sentimental Journey", in Spanish.

"—If this won't turn out something,—another will; —no matter,—'tis an assay upon human nature—I get my labour for my pains,—'tis enough;—the pleasure of the experiment has kept my senses and the best part of my blood awake, and laid the gross to sleep."

But the gross part did not sleep, hunger kept it awake. I had read somewhere that after three or four days of fasting the craving for food ceased. This prospect consoled me.

Tuesday, April 6th.

Second day of heart trouble. In the afternoon the barber came to my cell, and the warder sat down on the bed as usual during the procedure and chattered. Discovered by means of judicious questioning that Madrid has not yet fallen; warder thinks the war will last a long time yet. Warder, barber and I agreed that there should be no wars.

Bread can't be put down a W.C. in one lump; I had to crumble it up into little morsels and pull the plug two or three times before it was all gone. In crumbling it I could smell whole corn-fields, bursting with vitamins in the sun. Soup is easier, it goes down at one swoop.

Wednesday, April 7th.

Got Jules Verne's "Round the World in Eighty Days". Thought it would be fun, but it does not amuse me at all. Either Verne is to blame or else my heart, which is constantly giving me trouble. Am forced continually to think of it and am incapable of concentrating on reading or writing for even ten minutes at a time.

I began to have day-dreams about food. I dreamed of beef-steaks, potatoes and cheese with the same voluptuous fervour as that with which schoolboys dream of film actresses. I fancy that if the function of eating were so restricted and hedged about with taboos by society as the function of love, the psycho-analysts would have their work cut out to deal with repressed hunger-complexes and thirst neuroses. If a man dreamed of a violin it would signify that his dark instincts were yearning for a leg of mutton, and if a man quarrelled with his father in a dream, it would mean that he wanted to have more porridge for breakfast.

Thursday, April 8th.

Have made a discovery.

This afternoon the blond German had another conversation with the mysterious Carlos. He said that Carlos should write a letter to his Consul and put it on the window-ledge in the north corner of courtyard; he, the German, would then get it sent on for him. I wondered how on earth Carlos could do this when he was in an isolation cell.

Then during the siesta I saw the tall man with spectacles stroll casually to the window described and fumble about there. So the mysterious Carlos is identical with the new siesta-promenader.

Then, later in the afternoon, the German went and took the letter.

This has been my only distraction to-day. My heart is giving me such trouble that I am unable to read. The Devil take Phineas Fogg; his cold-bloodedness is a direct provocation.

I had thought that the craving for food ceased after four days. It doesn't.

Quite the contrary.

Friday, April 9th.

Two months to-day since Bolín appeared in Sir Peter's house with his revolver.

Have at last got rid of Phineas Fogg and have been given Tolstoy's "War and Peace".

A new promenader has appeared in the patio during the siesta. A little Andalusian peasant with a wild black stubble of beard and soft, blue, slightly prominent eyes.

My heart no better; to-day the sixth day. . . .

Have thirty pesetas left. Shall buy no more extra provisions, only cigarettes and soap.

Ever since I have been ill time has passed appallingly slowly. Twice or three times as slowly as before. It not only limps, it drags a leaden weight behind it. This is because I am unable to read, to write, to concentrate—in brief, to forget time. This theorising about time is gradually becoming an obsession. When I was still young in this prison I tried to lie in wait for the hands of my watch, to

experience pure time. Now I know that an inexorable law prevails: increasing awareness of time slows down its pace, complete awareness of time would bring it to a standstill. Only in death does the present become reality; time freezes. —he who succeeds in experiencing "pure time" experiences nothingness.

I had to take great care to see that my deception with regard to the food was not spotted. Not only did I throw away my rations, I also had to go on buying things from the canteen and dispose of them bit by bit. My shortage of money at last gave me an excuse to rid myself of these additional tortures.

Saturday, April 10th.

I have always thought it very funny when old ladies say that they cannot read war books, because they agitate them too much.

But now certain passages in "War and Peace" cause me such palpitations that I have to stop reading. When I read the passage describing the shooting of prisoners after the taking of Moscow by Napoleon I had to be sick. But all I got up was greenish bile.

I kept feeling my pulse and waited impatiently for the time when it would at last be irregular. Nothing of the kind. Frequent attacks of giddiness and physical weakness—that was all after six days without food. The craving for food did not diminish, but increased. I remember reading descriptions of how starving men gradually get a pleasant sensation of weightlessness and utter lightness. All bunk.

Sunday, April 11th.

Since for the moment I am unable to go on reading the bloodthirsty Tolstoy, I have started making up crossword puzzles. It is much more amusing, but also much more difficult than solving them. From one combination I got "Eumene". This certainly means something, but what? . . .

. . . I was still puzzling over "Eumene" when the Governor sent for me. He said he would try to "to get my case expedited". He said that I looked seedy, and asked if I were ill. I replied that I had chronic heart trouble, but that it would certainly improve. He said he would try to get permission for me to be allowed into the fresh air now and again. I said that I should like nothing better.

The Governor also looked seedy and I asked him how his operation had gone. He said he was still very weak and that the best thing he could do would be to get himself prescribed a rest cure in a cell. Everyone laughed. When I got back to my cell I felt quite cheerful.

Then came Mass, accompanied by choral singing. The singing—the first music except for "Ya la-ee-la", which is not music at all, but rhythmical singing—stirred me thoroughly.

But my pulse remained obstinately between eighty and eighty-eight, although a whole week had gone by.

Monday, April 12th.

A day of great, world-shaking events. . . .

First of all, I was shaved. During this operation a new warder was on duty—a youth in Phalangist uniform, with pince-nez, whom I had seen yesterday strutting about like a turkey-cock in the patio and bullying one or two wretched peasants. When the shaving was over, he stayed in my cell and went on with our conversation. Later Don Ramón and the librarian joined us, and it became a regular tea-party.

The youth in pince-nez indulged at intervals in charming witticisms, brandishing his revolver right under my nose and saying that sooner or later I would be shot, anyway. Don Ramón, who was sitting behind him on the bed, signed to me not to take him seriously, and even went so far as to tap his forehead. "If you were in my place and I were the warder," I said, or something like it, "you would

find such jokes exceedingly distasteful." "That's true," he said, extremely astonished, and from then on mended his manners somewhat. He abused the "Reds", and said they tortured their prisoners, put out their eyes, etc. I said that was absolutely untrue; I had imagined the same of the opposite side; one always thought the worst of the enemy. He said that also was true, and then added, with a grin: "Here in prison you're all treated like gentlemen, until you're shot; but if one of you falls into the hands of the Moors at the front it's no laughing matter, I can tell you."

I asked him whether, as a Catholic, he approved of the torturing of human beings. "Well, no," he said with an embarrassed smile. And so it went on for a while; in-between-times we talked about England, about Darwin, and whether men would ever fly to the moon.

This visit lasted nearly two hours. I wondered what it could all mean.

Then the mysterious librarian told me his story. He was not a professional boxer at all, but the proprietor of an advertising agency in Paris. Shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War he had gone bankrupt and had fled to Spain. His creditors had got on his tracks, and the French Government had requested the Spanish Government to arrest and extradite him. He was arrested in Seville a week before the Insurrection. The librarian—we will call him "Henri"—appealed against his extradition. Then the Civil War had begun, conditions in prison "had undergone certain changes", as he discreetly put it, and now it was Henri's dearest wish to be handed over to the authorities of his own country. All the more so since his creditors, touched by his dramatic story, had declared themselves ready to compound. The French Consul in Seville had done his best to get the lost sheep sent home again, but now the rebel authorities were unwilling to let him go. To them a Frenchman is a "Red", and the place for a "Red" is the prison patio. The ludicrous thing is that Henri alleges

that he is a member of the "Croix de Feu," Colonel de la Rocque's Fascist organization.

Henri told his story with an air of injured innocence, and we kept having to laugh, Don Ramón, the youth with pince-nez, Henri and I. The two warders must have known the story inside out, for they nodded benevolently at every sentence as though listening to a well-worn anecdote. When he had finished the Phalangist declared that Henri too would be shot sooner or later; and then the tea-party broke up. As I saw my guests to the door, Don Ramón beckoned with his finger and allowed me to get a glimpse of the outside of my cell door.

I had been given a new plate; my name was on it—but "*Ojo*" and "*Incomunicado*" had vanished.

So this was the solution of the mystery. My solitary confinement, thanks to the good offices of the Governor, was at an end.

Round about seven the Phalangist returned, and informed me officially that from to-morrow morning onwards I was to be allowed to walk in the patio during the siesta hours, from one to three. I asked if I might now at last write to the Consul. He said "Yes", but letters must be written in ink and I could not buy pen and ink until to-morrow, as the canteen was closed.

Eureka!

I could now have started eating again, for my goal had been attained independently of my efforts. But out of caution I decided to wait until the letter to the Consul had been safely dispatched.

Monday, April 12th (at night).

A moment ago—10 p.m.—the *jefe de servicio* was here. A *jefe* that I have never seen before, an elderly man with grizzled hair. He said that the office had received instructions from the military authorities that from to-morrow on I was to be allowed in the patio with the other prisoners, that is to say, the whole day long.

Better still!

Tuesday, April 13th.

I was up by six and I waited in a fever of impatience for the moment when I should at last emerge from my hole. The prisoners appeared in the courtyard at 8 o'clock as usual—but my cell door was not opened. I drummed on the door—in vain. At last, at breakfast, the warder explained that a different *jefe* was on duty to-day—"Scarface" of the leaking cistern incident—and that he said he had received no instructions with regard to me. I asked for pen and ink—this too was refused, "since the *jefe* had no instructions". I asked to speak to the *jefe*. He sent a message to say he was too busy.

I was about to fly into a towering rage.

. . . But I reflected that fortunately I had not broken my fast; that to-day was the ninth day; that my pulse—at last—varied between sixty and a hundred-and-five, and that it could be only a few more days at the most before they would have to transfer me to a hospital. . . .

Tuesday evening.

At 12 o'clock Angelito suddenly came in with a message from the *jefe* to say that the military authorities had phoned through confirming that I was definitely to be allowed out in the patio between one and three . . . he had received no instructions, however, to let me have pen and ink.

A fresh period of feverish waiting until one. At last the whistle sounds, the prisoners in the patio line up four abreast and are led indoors. The patio is empty. In ten minutes' time, at the most, Byron, the consumptive Carlos and the newcomer must appear; and then at last my cell door will be opened.

A quarter past one comes, half-past one, a quarter to two, nothing stirs. The others do not appear in the patio either.

I cannot contain myself any longer and I start beating

out a positive tattoo on the door—hammer with my tin bowl on the steel and kick it till my feet are sore. It makes a hell of a din. After two minutes of this the door opens and Angelito, the *jefe* and "Captain Bligh" appear. They storm at me in chorus; Angelito loudest of all. (He has not had a tip for the last few days and knows that I have only twenty pesetas left.) I explain why I have been drumming on the door. "Captain Bligh" thunders that he will let me out when it suits him, and if it doesn't suit him he won't let me out at all; and if I behave like this again he will stamp on me, trample on me, crush me like a worm.

All this takes place in the open doorway. Byron, the consumptive and the newcomer, who have obviously just been let out of their cells, stand listening in the corridor. Then we are all four allowed out into the courtyard.

I feel the hot sun on my face, inhale a mouthful of air—and then everything suddenly turns grey, green, black before my eyes, and I find myself sitting on the ground. The other three set me on my legs again. Byron and the newcomer grasp me under the armpits; and after a few steps I am all right again.

We stand about together in a group, opposite Cell 36. At first I can do nothing but breathe in the air. Real air again for the first time—instead of the dense gaseous mixture, compounded of the odour of the stuffy bed, the smell of stale food and the stench of the lavatory on which I have existed for the past two months. Then we start talking.

My first question is of course, what sentences they have been given.

"*La muerte*," says Byron, and grins.

"*La muerte*," says the consumptive. He is a well-known Republican politician, and Byron was formerly his secretary; they have both been waiting for three months to be shot.

"*La muerte*," says the third man. He is a little Andalusian peasant, a Militiaman, taken prisoner on the Almería front.

Carlos was not there; presumably he is ill.

Carlos is an Italian, a lieutenant in the Italian contingent fighting under Franco's leadership. His arrest seems to be somehow connected with his German friend.

The Militiaman is called Nicolás. He was taken prisoner ten days ago and sentenced three days ago. He was charged, as are all prisoners of war, with "*rebelión militar*" (armed rebellion). Nicolás told us, as we paced up and down the patio, of his trial by the Seville court-martial. It had lasted three minutes. The President had read out the prisoner's name, birthplace and name of the place where he was captured. The Prosecutor had demanded the death penalty, and had added: "I only regret that I cannot send this *rojecillo* (miserable little Red) in a cage to Geneva before he is shot, in order to show the League of Nations what pitiable objects are these so-called fighters for justice and democracy."

Nicolás had somehow managed to get hold of a stalk of lettuce; he nibbled away at it as he told us his story, and offered us each a leaf. I refused—thinking of my heart; the two others accepted with alacrity. "When do you think they'll shoot me?" asked Nicolás. "*Paciencia*, my boy," said the Republicans with all the contempt of old inmates for the greenhorn. "One must not expect too much. We've been waiting three months now."

But then we all three began to comfort him. He was far more afraid, even, than we were, for the ink was scarcely dry on his death sentence. We told him stories about how death sentences were only passed as a joke, to frighten people, and actually no one was ever shot; we three, who had been in prison an aggregate of eight months, and were not dead yet, were living proofs of this. He was only too glad to believe it, and in the end we believed it ourselves. We became quite gay, and Byron suggested that a notice should be hung in the patio between one and three: "No admittance except to those showing death sentences."

I offered to lend Nicolás a book, but he said that he could not read. He stroked the cover of the Tolstoy lovingly with his horny peasant's paws, and his eyes took on a stupid, sad look. He said he had hoped, once the war was won, to have had an opportunity of learning to read.

To-morrow is the anniversary of the proclamation of the Spanish Republic. The consumptive and his secretary are racking their brains wondering what sort of flags the foreign consulates in Seville and Burgos will fly. From the tone of their discussion I gather that this argument has been going on for weeks. They share a cell. Little Nicolás enquired despondently if they had nothing better to worry about, whereupon Byron drew himself up like a Spanish hidalgo and flashed at him: "No, Señor."

The air smelt glorious; it smelt of spring and the sea.

We were not taken back to our cells until half past three.

At seven o'clock Angelito arrived with pen and ink. I had given him a five-peseta voucher to change for me, but he forgot to return me the three pesetas change.

Wrote my letter to the British Consul in Seville, but hear that it cannot be posted till to-morrow morning. To-morrow, when the letter has gone off, I rather think my heart will improve.

To-morrow the tenth day of my illness.

Wednesday, April 14th.

Gave letter to warder at breakfast-time, but he brought it back from the prison censor's office, saying that it must be written in Spanish. The merchant from Gibraltar who interpreted for me before was called in to help me to write it in correct Spanish. Afterwards he told me that he had come to Seville some weeks ago with a Spaniard on business

in connection with the delivery of war material—whereupon they were both arrested. There are three of them in No. 33; the third is the representative of a big American automobile firm, and he is also there for currency smuggling. They obtain food, wine and even coffee from the hotel, and in addition Angelito buys from forty to fifty pesetas' worth of goods for them every day in the canteen. They are the aristocrats of the prison; I hate them. The fellow promised to have some coffee and a chicken sent to my cell—am convinced he will not keep his promise. (P.S. I was right.)

He went on to say that he and his friends "hoped shortly to move into No. 39", just as though he were talking of rooms in a hotel. He said, further, that Angelito was a "bloody bastard" who would murder his own brother for a tip.

At midday my letter at last went off—I saw Don Antonio post it in the box in the corridor, after it had been censored. He says that the Consul is certain to come to-morrow.

A nauseating set-to with Angelito over the three pesetas. He said I could do what I liked with my beastly money, but again did not return it.

Then, shortly after one, pretty punctually this time, I was let out into the patio again. The two Republicans were there, and Carlos.

But Nicolás was missing.

I was about to ask the warder what had become of him, but the other two urgently advised me not to. Carlos kept at a distance from us; he had cut a swastika out of paper and stuck it in his buttonhole, and he stumped up and down alone by the outer wall.

Finally I did ask the warder after all. He shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

Requiescat in pace, Nicolás. Let us hope it was all over swiftly and that they did not make you suffer too much. They chose a solemn day for your execution. I wonder what flags the Consulates flew?

Little you were, a little Andalusian peasant, with soft, slightly prominent eyes, one of the poor and humble. This book is dedicated to you. What good does it do you? You could not read it even if you were still alive. That is why they shot you, because you had the impudence to wish to learn to read. You and a few million like you, who seized your old firearms to defend the new order which might perhaps some day have taught you to read.

They call it armed rebellion, Nicolás. They call it the hand of Moscow, Nicolás. They call it the instinct of the rabble, Nicolás.

That a man should want to learn to read.

My God, they should really have sent you to Geneva in a cage, with the inscription: "Ecce Homo, Anno Domini 1937."

VIII

I HAD INTENDED to stop my hunger strike as soon as my letter to the Consul had been sent off.

The letter had gone off just before I was allowed out into the patio. Then I learned of Nicolás's execution, and was so shattered by it that I postponed the celebration of my first meal until the next day.

This was Thursday, April 15th.

I breakfasted on coffee with extra condensed milk and cake from the canteen; it was exactly ten days since I had touched any food. But my pleasure was spoilt. At every bite I was reminded of the lettuce which Nicolás had offered me.

I could scarcely bear to wait till one o'clock to be let out into the courtyard. Carlos was there, complete with swastika.

The two others were not there.

We walked up and down, Carlos and I, avoiding each other and, both of us very pale, keeping an eye on the door from which they should have appeared.

At last Carlos came up to me—hitherto we had not exchanged a single word—introduced himself formally as Lieutenant Carlos T—— and said that early that morning

through his spy-hole he had seen the two of them being marched down the corridor.

But a few seconds later the door opened and the two Republicans appeared, washed and shaved.

We were so overjoyed that we rushed up to them, and then we all shook hands and patted each other on the back. The two others explained that they had been taken to have a shower that morning. We said not a word to them of what we had feared; but they guessed it.

As a result of all this Carlos and I had suddenly become friends. We spoke German to each other, and he told me his story.

Carlos was a lieutenant in the Italian force. He had been present at the entry of the rebel forces into Malaga, and remembered marching past Sir Peter's house and noticing the Union Jack. He even fancied that he had seen me standing on the balcony. Later he had been sent to the Madrid front.

In the meantime he had made friends at Seville headquarters with a German transport driver. The German, who was called Johnnie, was the blonde young man I had seen in the courtyard. Johnnie, it turned out later, was a bit of a rotter; had on several occasions got himself into trouble with the German police, and had finally volunteered for the German expeditionary corps in Spain, because he had heard that lots of money was to be made there. In the middle of March, at the request of the German authorities, Johnnie had been arrested in Seville, and Carlos had been recalled to Seville from the Madrid front to give evidence with regard to his friend. He had been summoned to appear at police headquarters. Arrived there, he had been so discourteously treated by the Civil Guards in the course of his examination that, feeling a slur had been cast on his honour as an officer, he had punched the Chief of Police in the nose. Whereupon they had handcuffed him —and here he was now in prison.

The most curious thing in the whole of this curious story

was that Carlos should have been put with us condemned prisoners. Probably because the authorities did not want to put him with Johnnie. Moreover, they did not dare to herd him, as an Italian officer, with the criminals in the "beautiful patio"; so here he was with us.

This was what we surmised. But Carlos confessed to me that he found our company extremely disquieting. He was very much afraid that they would come for him one night and shoot him out of hand. I told him that was nonsense and that his case was bound to be cleared up in a few days.

He said that if I had any idea of what went on between the Spaniards and Italians I would not talk so optimistically. The fact that an Italian officer could be marched off in handcuffs spoke volumes for the idyllic relations existing between them. He had come to Spain out of sheer enthusiasm (incidentally his pay was four thousand lire a month, plus forty pesetas a day expenses allowance) and now they'd gone and put him into jug like a common criminal, and taken away his money and papers. He had nothing to smoke, no comb, no soap, nothing to read. . . .

I said that he needn't bother to go on with the catalogue, I knew all about it. I found the young man distinctly charming, but was unable to suppress a certain feeling of malicious pleasure at his discomfiture.

He was twenty-two years old, a naturalised Italian of Austrian origin, and a student in Milan. He was studying to become a Latin teacher in a secondary school.

He was wearing the swastika because the fasces were too difficult to cut out of paper.

He said he had been convinced that those fighting on the side of the Reds were mostly Russians, and had been amazed to find so many Spaniards on the other side.

He said he had been convinced that all Reds were barbarians and that he was surprised to find what nice people the two Republicans and I were.

Carlos's character was a touching mixture of naïveté,

narrow-mindedness and good-natured ambition to get on in this complicated world. But this, apparently, he was not finding so easy.

I had spent the first two months in the Seville prison in complete isolation. Only now, when I came into contact with the other prisoners, did I learn what was going on around me.

I learned that in the week after my transfer to the prison thirty-seven men from the big patio had been executed.

In the last week of February no executions had taken place, in March forty-five—almost all the victims prisoners of war from the various fronts. In every case the procedure had been exactly the same as in that of Nicolás. True, not a single man had been shot without trial. But these trials were far more disgraceful than the unceremonious slaughter of prisoners in the front lines immediately after a battle.

In the case of every single prisoner of war, without exception, the charge was one of "rebelión militar". Those who were defending the legal Government against open rebellion, were condemned for taking part in a rebellion —by an authority that claimed to be a court of law and to pronounce judgment in the name of justice.

The course taken by this grim comedy was always the same. The proceedings lasted two or three minutes. The so-called Prosecutor demanded the death sentence; always and without exception. The so-called Defending Officer —always and without exception—asked for a life sentence in view of mitigating circumstances. Then the prisoner was marched off. He was never informed of his sentence. Sentence was passed the moment he was out of the door; it was one of death; always and without exception.

The record of the sentence was passed on to the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Forces, General Queipo de Llano. The sentences were carried out by Queipo in

the order listed. Twenty to twenty-five per cent of the prisoners—according to Queipo's mood or the situation at the front—were reprieved. The rest were shot.

From the moment he left the court martial the accused was left in uncertainty as to his fate. Were his sentence commuted to thirty years' imprisonment he was informed by letter—a week or a month or six months later. Were the death sentence confirmed, he learned of it only at the moment of execution.

In the interval he was left to play football and leapfrog in the patio, and count his buttons every morning to see whether he was going to be shot that night.

There were men in the patio who had been waiting for four months to be shot. The record was held by a Captain of the Militia—four and a half months. He was executed a few days before my release.

Nicolás had been lucky; he had had to wait only four days.

During March forty-five men were shot.

During the first thirteen days of April there were no executions.

During the night of April 13th to 14th seventeen men were shot, in celebration of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic. Nicolás was among them.

Two nights later, the night of Thursday, eight were shot. This was the first time I heard anything.

The proceedings were very subdued; perhaps that explains why I hadn't heard them before. But now I was on the watch.

I knew that the critical time was between midnight and two o'clock in the morning. For some days I stood from midnight until two o'clock with my ear pressed to the door of my cell.

During the first night of my vigil, the night of Wednesday, nothing happened.

During the second night . . .

A feeling of nausea still comes over me when I remember that night.

I had gone to sleep, and I woke up shortly before midnight.

In the black silence of the prison, charged with the nightmarish dreams of thirteen hundred sleeping men, I heard the murmured prayer of the priest and the ringing of the sanctus bell.

Then a cell door, the third to the left of mine, was opened, and a name was called out. "*Qué?*" (What?) asked a sleepy voice, and the priest's voice grew clearer and the bell rang louder.

And now the drowsy man in his cell understood. At first he only groaned; then in a dull voice, he moaned for help: "*Socorro, socorro.*"

"*Hombre*, there's no help for you," said the warder who accompanied the priest.

He said this neither in a hostile nor in a friendly tone, but simply as though stating a fact. For a moment the man who was about to die was silent; the warder's quiet, sober manner puzzled him. And then he began to laugh.

It was not the loud, shrill laughter of an actor feigning madness; the man kept patting his knees with his hands, and his laughter was, rather, quiet and subdued, full of little gasps and hiccoughs.

"You are only pretending," he said to the priest. "I knew at once that you were only pretending."

"*Hombre*, this is no pretence," said the warder in the same dry tone as before.

They marched him off.

I heard him shouting outside. But the sound of the shots came only a few minutes later.

In the meantime the priest and the warder had opened the door of the next cell; it was No. 42, the second to my left. Again, "*Qué?*" And again the prayer and the bell.

This one sobbed and whimpered like a child. Then he cried out for his mother: "*Madre, madre!*"

And again: "*Madre, madre!*"

And again: "*Madre, madre!*"

"*Hombre*, why didn't you think of her before?" said the warder.

They went on to the next cell. When my neighbour was called, he said nothing. Most probably he was already awake, and, like me, prepared. But when the priest had ended his prayer, he asked, as if of himself: "Why must I die?" The priest answered in five words, uttered in a solemn voice but rather hurriedly:

"Faith, man. Death means release."

They marched him off.

They came to my cell and the priest fumbled at the bolt. I could see him through the key-hole. He was a little, black, greasy man.

"No, not this one," said the warder.

They went on to the next cell. He, too, was prepared. He asked no questions. While the priest prayed, he began in a low voice to sing the "Marseillaise". But after a few bars his voice broke, and he too sobbed.

They marched him off. . . .

. . . . .

And now I realized why the merchant from Gibraltar had said that he and his friends would shortly be moving in to No. 39.

I frequently awoke during this night feeling my bed shaking, as though in an earthquake. Then I realized that it was my own body that was trembling from head to foot. The moment I awoke my body grew still; the moment I fell asleep the nervous trembling began again. I thought at first that it was a permanent affliction like shell shock: but I only had two further attacks in the next few days; then it passed off.

Carlos was in a far worse plight. He had heard all that I had heard. During the night of Friday, nine were shot; during Saturday night, thirteen. We heard everything, four nights running. On Monday morning I was called to Carlos's cell; he was lying on the ground by the door, foam on his lips, both legs stiff and paralysed.

In the space of five days they had shot forty-seven men. Even for this prison it was a record. The faces in the patio were grey; during a game of football two men had a set to and pulled each other's hair out in handfuls. In the morning the warders who had been on night duty crept along the corridors, pale, scared, and troubled. Even Angelito, who had to open the doors of the condemned cells night after night, arrived one morning red-eyed. "If this goes on," he said, "they'll finish us all off."

Our two Republicans in the siesta patio carried it off best. Once, on Sunday, when we looked up at the window of one of the mass cells, from which one of their friends used to wave through the iron bars at three each afternoon, his cell companions signalled back that his turn had come the night before. Whereupon Byron had to vomit; then he lit a cigarette and uttered an obscenity.

When we were marched back to our cells, we did not dare, out of superstition, to say "*hasta mañana*" (until to-morrow). We murmured "*hasta . . .*" and were ashamed of being so superstitious.

One evening Don Antonio came back into my cell after serving out the food. "Why are you eating so little?" he asked. I said I had no appetite. "Are you afraid?" he asked. I reflected for a while and then said "Yes". He did not reply, but shrugging his shoulders, offered me a cigarette and pulled the door carefully to, without slamming it.

Carlos told me that two had been taken from Johnnie's cell the night before. Johnnie had told him that they had both wept and he had cracked jokes about the cowardice of the Reds. Carlos had asked Johnnie whether he himself

was not afraid. Johnnie said that he wasn't a lousy Red. One of the executed Reds had lent him two pesetas the day before; at least he wouldn't have to return the money now.

I asked Carlos whether he proposed to go on being friends with Johnnie. He said he would like to strangle him with his bare hands.

We had become very free with such expressions. Death stalked the prison; we felt the beating of his wings, he buzzed round our faces like a tiresome fly. Wherever we went, wherever we stood, we could not get rid of that buzzing.

During the night of Saturday I again heard laughter —like that that had come from No. 43.

It was pretty infectious, and I wonder things went off so smoothly.

On Sunday, while I was in the patio, a head was poked out of a window of one of the mass cells on the second floor —these windows had no bars in front of them. The owner of the face had a black cap perched on an ugly little head, and looked like a jockey. He shouted down to us, asking whether any of us knew Hungarian.

I am of Hungarian origin; the fact must have got round in the prison.

The man called out to me in Hungarian that he had got a letter the day before telling him that he would be shot within the next two days. If ever I got back to Hungary, would I let his family know?

I said it was nonsense; no one was ever told before being shot.

While talking to the Hungarian, I did not dare to look upwards; we stood opposite each other, Byron and I, and gesticulated silently so that the head warder, when looking out of the window, might think we were talking to one another.

The Hungarian replied that, not knowing Spanish, he had been unable to read the letter, but his cell companions

had told him that it contained the information that he was to be shot. Then he went on to say that thirty-five had been taken out of the adjoining mass cell during the past month.

I asked him where.

"Don't ask such a stupid question," he said. "Where all Spaniards are taken—to the butcher's block."

The Hungarian was still there the next day. He threw me down a letter for his wife. I did not dare to look up at him; I had been warned that there were men in the barber's shop, the windows of which also looked on to the patio, who blabbed everything they saw to the head warder.

During the next few days notes were frequently thrown out to me from cell windows, warning me of spies. Some of them warned me of Carlos, whose swastika had attracted everyone's notice. "Take care, foreigner," one of the notes ran. "There are spies here who are anxious to save their own lives by handing others over to the executioner."

The notes were either rolled up into little balls or else tied up with a bit of string. When we saw a note fall at the other end of the courtyard, two of us strolled over, came to a halt, went on talking, and finally let a cigarette or a book fall to the ground so to be able to pick up the note without being detected. Then we unfolded the note in our trousers' pockets and put it away in the book. Finally Byron or I sat down with our backs to the wall and read—apparently the book, in reality the note.

The next day the Hungarian was still there. He threw me down a fresh letter of farewell to his wife.

For five days running his head appeared at the window on the stroke of two and a fresh letter of farewell was dropped into the courtyard. On the sixth day one of his cell companions appeared behind him, pulled a face and tapped his forehead. Something began to dawn on us.

In the end we learned the solution of the riddle through Carlos, who had got it from Johnnie. The Hungarian was

a volunteer in Franco's Foreign Legion and was in prison because of some fraud or other. His cell contained five Republican Militiamen who were condemned to death. It wasn't exactly an elevating experience for them to have to share a cell with an enemy. Particularly the most detested kind of enemy, a foreign mercenary; and to have to be marched off to death before his eyes. The Hungarian didn't know any Spanish. One day, when he received an official communication, they tricked him into believing that he was going to be shot. They wanted to have the satisfaction of knowing that he also should feel what death tasted like. After a week the two survivors out of the five were fed up with his moaning and gave away their "little joke". Shortly afterwards he was released.

Should any moralist feel a need to comment on the matter, I should like to say that I regard the conduct of the Militiamen as completely reprehensible and that in their place I should have behaved in exactly the same way.

On the night of Tuesday seventeen were shot.
On Thursday night eight.
On Friday night nine.
On Saturday night thirteen.

I tore strips off my shirt and stuffed my ears with them so as not to hear anything during the night. It was no good. I cut my gums with a splinter of glass, and said they were bleeding, so as to obtain some iodised cotton wool. I stuffed the cotton wool in my ears. This was no good, either.

Our hearing became preternaturally sharp. We heard everything. On the nights of the executions we heard the telephone ring at ten o'clock. We heard the warder on duty answer it. We heard him repeating at short intervals: "ditto . . . ditto . . . ditto. . . ." We knew it was someone at military headquarters reading out the

list of those to be shot during the night. We knew that the warder wrote down a name before every "ditto". But we did not know what names they were and we did not know whether ours was among them.

The telephone always rang at ten. Then until midnight or one o'clock there was time to lie on one's bed and wait. Each night we weighed our lives in the balance and each night found them wanting.

Then at twelve or one we heard the shrill sound of the night bell. It was the priest and the firing squad. They always arrived together.

Then began the opening of doors, the ringing of the sanctus bell, the praying of the priest, the cries for help and the shouts of "Mother".

The steps came nearer down the corridor, receded, came nearer, receded. Now they were at the next cell; now they were in the other wing; now they were coming back. Clearest of all was always the priest's voice. "Lord, have mercy on this man, Lord, forgive him his sins, Amen." We lay on our beds and our teeth chattered

On Tuesday night seventeen were shot.

On Thursday night eight were shot.

On Friday night nine were shot.

On Saturday night thirteen were shot.

Six days shalt thou labour, saith the Lord, and on the seventh day, the Sabbath, thou shalt do no manner of work.

On Sunday night three were shot.

* * *

Monday, April 19th.

Hitherto I have always been shaved in my cell; yesterday they took me to the barber's shop. Saw myself in a mirror for the first time for two and a half months. Was astonished to find myself so unchanged. A man is really as elastic as

a football; you get a kick which you imagine will knock you to pieces; but the outer case springs back into shape and the only trace left is at the most a spattering of mud. If our consciousness were the aggregate of our experiences we should all be grey at twenty-five.

The water-pipe that runs through my cell sometimes acts like a speaking-tube. If I lay my ear to it, I can hear confused noises: now a few bars of wireless music coming from the Governor's room, now a jumble of noises from several cells. Sometimes I even think I can hear women's voices—the wing on the other side is the women's prison. For the last three days all these sounds from distant spheres have been drowned by the voice of one man who keeps sobbing and crying for his mother. He must be in one of the cells near mine. Whenever I put my ear to the pipe I can hear him. I asked Angel who it was that was continually crying. He said it was a Militiaman who had formerly shared the cell with his brother, but who since Friday night had been alone.

This morning, after they had taken breakfast round, the warder and Angel came back into my cell. "Come quickly," said the warder. "Your friend has gone off his head." We went to Cell 37. On the floor, parallel with the iron bedstead, lay Carlos, stretched out at full length, the swastika still in his buttonhole. The sweat was pouring down his face, and little bubbles of foam had formed on his lips. His eyes were wide open. I looked at him, and did not know what to think.

The warder dug me in the ribs. "Go on, say something to him," he said. "Talk German to him." (Carlos spoke only a few broken words of Spanish, and I had already interpreted for him several times.)

I asked Carlos what the devil was the matter with him; I shook him, I pinched his arm—he did not show the slightest reaction and did not seem to know me. Angel and I fetched a bucket of water and poured it over his head. Then we pulled his ears. After this he gradually came to, and began to whimper and wave his hands about. We held him down and I talked to him until at last he recognized me and began inconsequentially to complain that his back hurt him and that he could not move his legs. We felt his legs; they were as stiff as pokers and the knees would not bend. When we tried to bend them by force, he roared with pain.

Finally we laid him on the bed, and the doctor's assistant —one of the prisoners, a medical student—came along. We diagnosed the case as one of hysterical conversion. Then the *jefe de servicio* arrived and said that it was nothing more or less than malingering, and that if we took no notice of Carlos he would soon pull himself together.

At last they all went out of the cell and left me alone with Carlos. I did not turn my head, but I was certain that the *jefe* was peeping through the spy-hole.

I said to Carlos that if he were malingering he might safely tell me; I certainly wouldn't peach on him. But he did not understand me and all that I could get out of him was that he had been hearing the same sounds as I myself at night, that the priest with the sanctus bell had approached his cell; he had heard the tinkle of the bell growing louder and louder and had known no more. . . .

After a few minutes they came for me and locked me in my own cell again. The *jefe* said that if Carlos was not better by midday he would be put in a punishment cell, and that would certainly cure him.

Poor Carlos. His legs were cleverer than his head; when he thought he was about to go to his death they stiffened and refused to carry him.

If he is left a cripple, they will pin no medal on his breast.

Only three of us in the patio this afternoon. I told Byron and the consumptive the whole story; they shrugged their shoulders and did not seem to be particularly moved. But afterwards they gave Angel some cigarettes to take to Carlos in his cell.

At the evening meal I asked the warder how Carlos was. He merely tapped his forehead and said, "Your *amigo* is balmy."

Wrote a fresh letter to the Consul. The first was sent off five days ago. Since when I have been daily and hourly expecting a visit from him, or at least an answer. Am convinced that the first letter must have gone astray; otherwise inexplicable that he should not have responded within twenty-four hours to my S O S.

It is a dreadful disappointment. For two and a half months I fought for permission to write the letter—for ten days I have had "heart attacks"—and now there's no answer, nothing.

Tuesday, April 20th.

Nothing from Consul.

But the first quiet night for days.

No telephone in the evening. No night-bell.

I feel like a convalescent. The whole prison seems to breathe again.

In the morning I was called to Carlos once more. Yesterday evening he had been a little better, had eaten something and tried to hobble round the room on his stiff legs. Now he is unconscious again. While I was in his cell a representative came from the Italian Consulate to take a record of the whole case. But Carlos could not be made to come to. This is the clearest possible proof that he is not putting it on—he too has waited long enough to get into touch with his Consulate.

Wednesday, April 21st.

Yesterday, when the warder brought my evening meal, he said with marked kindliness that I must eat up, and ordered me a second helping. It seemed to me that Angel and the other orderly looked at me very peculiarly when the warder said this. Then the wine arrived, and, against the rules, I was given a second beakerful without my asking for it. The orderly who brought the wine also looked at me rather peculiarly, I thought.

I was convinced that my turn had come.

I did not go to sleep, but paced up and down, waiting for the telephone to ring, and was amazed at my own indifference. It occurred to me that I found it harder to part from Byron and the consumptive and Angel than from all my friends and relatives.

At ten o'clock sharp the telephone rang. Seven times I heard "Ditto—ditto—ditto".

I paced up and down until eleven; then I suddenly felt very tired. Surely, I thought, I may as well lie down for another hour. When I woke up, they were bringing my breakfast.

I really do not understand how I managed it. I am more and more puzzled at the working of the wheels within my brain—I wonder, indeed, that they still work at all. I am absolutely convinced that Carlos has more physical courage than I—in Malaga he got a bayonet-wound in the arm in a hand-to-hand fight, and I had been very much impressed by the way in which he had related the story. And now he lies there in the grip of a hysterical attack, and the rôles are reversed.

It's quite different for the two Spaniards. There are two of them at night. This makes an enormous, an absolutely enormous difference. . . .

But if the warder and Angelito offer me a second helping again, I shall bash their faces in.

Or was it, after all, not imagination, and had they perhaps known of an order which was only cancelled at the last moment.

I shall never know.

But after all we're not dead yet.

No news again from the Consul.

Thursday, April 22nd.

Late last evening letter from Consul arrived. Dated 20th. Writes that he has received my letters of the 14th and 19th and has requested to be allowed to visit me.

Once more granite rocks have turned out to be air-balloons.

Was at first mad with delight—then overcome by unspeakable nausea at finding myself for the moment indifferent to the fate of the others, now that I felt comparatively safe. This feeling of nausea was so intense that I could not sleep, although to-night all was still. Strange how all objectively favourable happenings—the letter from home—the money—the letter from the Consul—all turn back on one. The urge to bear the burden of the others acts on me like a categorical imperative; and it is, after all, merely a question of taste that I say "burden" instead of "cross". But from the same source comes the equally ardent desire to slay the greasy little black priest who rings the sanctus bell at nights.

Carlos was better to-day; he stumped about with us in the courtyard. His legs are still somewhat stiff, but that will probably soon pass off.

The Spaniards, on the other hand, were in a great state. They came into the courtyard, oddly agitated, and fell upon me, both at once, demanding to know which was the better newspaper, "The Times" or the "Daily Herald". I realized that they must have had a bitter quarrel on the subject and so I tried to frame my answer in a manner worthy of Solomon. This was the worst thing I could have done, for then each maintained that he was right and they lost their heads completely and screamed at

each other. It would not have taken much for them to have gone for one another's throats.

Our patio more and more resembles a panopticon—Carlos with his paralysed legs, the other two with their nervous irritability and quarrelsomeness, and I with my insane qualms of conscience and mental purification rites after the Dominican model.

. . . . Is this to be taken *cum grano salis*? I myself no longer know.

Friday, April 23rd.

At three o'clock, when we were led back from the patio, I was given permission to go to the canteen myself to spend my last few pesetas on cigarettes. Johnnie was standing in the canteen drinking coffee. He looked as though he were going to speak to me, but I turned my back on him.

Then came Henri, the librarian. He was in radiant mood and told me that to-morrow at last he was being sent back to France. Promised me to go and see my wife in London or write to her.

(P.S. He did neither, of course.)

The comparative freedom of movement that I now enjoy makes the periods of being alone almost harder to bear. When, at three o'clock, the cell door falls to behind me, the waiting for the next afternoon begins.

The Consul has not been yet. What if they refuse to allow him to come at all?

Saturday, April 24th.

Yesterday evening young Caballero came into my cell, accompanied by a warder. He is a nice boy of twenty-five or twenty-six, perhaps even younger, dressed in brown overalls. He is guarded specially strictly, and has been "*incomunicado*" without intermission for nearly a year; may speak to no one, is not allowed out in the patio, but only to march up and down the corridor for two hours

daily, accompanied by a warder. I have often seen him through the spy-hole; he is always clean, tidy, and well-groomed, and apparently in good spirits. And yet he has had the same nightly experiences as I—and what he must have been through during the first few months, when a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, were marched off to execution every night, at that time without a trial or any kind of formality. . . .

Either the boy has a simple, childlike nature or else he is marvellously tough; I can't decide which.

He is very popular with the warders. When he appeared in my cell yesterday the warder explained that we might not talk to one another, and that they had merely come because Caballerito had nothing to read and had heard that I had the first volume of "War and Peace". Had I perhaps finished it, or in any case would I lend it to Caballerito for one night?

I gave him the book and asked if I might be allowed to shake Caballerito by the hand. We smiled at each other and as we shook hands I saw that the boy's eyes were moist. Then they both marched off with the Tolstoy.

Early to-day the new librarian came. A political prisoner this time, a man of about thirty, a former Socialist town councillor from Galicia. He brought the second volume of Tolstoy and wanted the first returned. I said it was with Caballero. Whereupon he flared up and said we had no right to exchange books without his permission—he had sixteen hundred books to look after, where would he be, etc. etc. I said that a night without anything to read was worse than hell; that he as a political prisoner ought to know that perfectly well; that the situation of all of us was not, God knew, one for bureaucratic formalities and that the exchange had been made with the warder's approval.

Whereupon he said that he didn't wish to argue with me and if I were undisciplined he would not bring me any books at all.

To which I replied he could go to blazes, adding a few more unprintable remarks. If the warder had not placed himself between us, we should have come to blows.

The librarian loped off. I felt as relieved after the row as after a purifying storm. But in half an hour's time he came back and mutely placed two books on the bed; a biography of Cervantes and a novel by Pío Baroja.

He made a formal apology and we shook hands, with emotion. Odd fish.

In the patio Carlos told me he had been taken in the morning to the Italian consulate under escort of two Civil Guards. The Consul had merely shaken his head resignedly at his story and told him he guaranteed that he would be released in the next few days. Carlos said he had the impression that the Consul had to deal with a dozen such cases every day. At the prison gates he had met the Governor, who had said in astonishment: "I thought, Teniente, you were free already."

Of course he is terribly happy. He has existed the whole time on the money he has borrowed from us; now he promises us mountains of gold when he's free. He means to write Mussolini a letter saying that we three ought to be released. He has even read out a draft of the letter to us. It begins with an account of his student years, his career in the Fascio, his military rank and his warlike deeds in Spain. Then it goes on to say that he has become convinced that the Reds are not all criminals, but many of then misguided idealists; then follows a heart-rending description of us three and finally the hope is politely but emphatically expressed that the Duce will, as proof of his nobility of spirit, restore us to the arms of our loved ones.

I had to translate it all into Spanish, and we were tactful enough to keep deadly serious faces.

Carlos then told us that there had been a group of pretty girls standing at the prison gates, flirting with the sentries.

The general atmosphere of the prison is considerably

better; the last three nights have been undisturbed and everyone hopes that a quieter period is coming again.

I still stuff cotton wool into my ears every evening, but I have worked out a new system for the night. I sleep only five and a half hours, from nine to half-past two, force myself to get up at three, and remain awake the whole day so as to be certain of being able to sleep during the critical hours. The hours till the morning are long—I have to pace up and down or read standing up so as not to fall asleep—but the method has proved efficacious and the mere consciousness that I can thus get the better of the nightmares gives me satisfaction and relative peace.

Sunday, April 25th.

Consul still not come. Carlos still not released. Byron has begun to write poetry and put Basque folk-tales into verse. He admires the Basques and despises the Andalusians. He loves talking in aphorisms and said to-day, twirling his little moustache: "Andalusia, my friend, is the scrotum of Africa, while the Basque country is the heart of Spain." I said it was a fine definition.

His chief, on the other hand, gives way increasingly to melancholia. Hitherto they have both had money, and been able to have enormous meals every day; hors d'oeuvres variés, beefsteak with fried egg and salad, fruit, black coffee, a bottle of wine per head, and chicken three times a week. Angelito used to take them all this every day in a basket and had done very well out of it. They refused to save, and every day Byron would say that the only thing he was afraid of was that they might be shot before they had devoured their money's worth. Now their money has given out; I too have no more, Carlos never had any. We have jointly borrowed twenty pesetas from Angel on condition we return him thirty when we get some. Then I have borrowed another ten from the other orderly. So at least we all have cigarettes.

Monday, April 26th.

Fainted during night. Another heart attack. This time it's either bend or break. . . .

IX

THE FOLLOWING THING happened:

On Sunday a new prisoner was taken to my former cell, No. 41.

I saw them bring him in. He was quite young, about fifteen or sixteen.

Captain Bligh was on duty that afternoon. It was Angel's day off, and the second orderly, Manuel, was taking his place. Manuel is a little degenerate cripple, with pronounced signs of water on the brain. Rumour has it that he was in prison for a life term for some sexual misdemeanour that had a fatal outcome. We all feel a certain physical aversion to him.

Towards evening Manuel got drunk. The orderlies often do. When he brought round the evening meal he could scarcely stand upright on his rickety legs, and the whole cell reeked of liquor.

At nine I heard Captain Bligh walking down the corridor with Manuel. They came to a halt outside No. 41, that is, almost outside my cell.

"They'll send for him to-night," said Captain Bligh.

Manuel answered in his high-pitched, tipsy, grotesque squeak.

"Funny he should have to die. The whole day he has been asking to be let out into the patio. Funny. . . ."

Whereupon the warder: "*Rojo, rojo.*"

I think he, too, was drunk. He boomed forth the "*rojo, rojo*" in his deep oily bass so that it sounded as though he were snoring.

At this moment the lad in No. 41 began to beat on the door with his fists; he must have heard it all. "I don't want to die," he shouted. "Mother, mother help, I don't want to die. Help, help. . . ."

And so on. . . .

The whole corridor echoed with the noise. The prison grew restive. From all the cells came confused, indistinct noises.

The lad went on bellowing.

Captain Bligh and Manuel fetched him from his cell and carried him off somewhere to a special isolation cell. On the way the drunken orderly stumbled and fell with a clatter to the ground. Other warders came up and helped to take the lad off.

A little later—it was not yet ten—the priest walked down the corridor, probably to confess the lad. Then a warder called out in peeved tones for brandy.

At ten the telephone rang. Three times I heard "*lo mismo*"—ditto.

Shortly after ten Don Ramón came to my cell and said that if there was a row later on I must not get worried—one of the prisoners was ill and they were going to move him to hospital in the night.

Obviously they were afraid the lad would kick up a shindy when they took him off. As a rule everything had gone off very quietly during the execution nights; the warders had obviously worked out a technique for preventing scenes.

At half-past ten I heard subdued whispering, tittering, and very odd snuffling and smacking noises in the corridor.

I looked through the spy-hole.

In the empty, lighted corridor a strange scene was being enacted; the little Manuel and Captain Bligh were playing at "horses". Manuel was the horse, and had a string tied round him; Captain Bligh was holding the reins. They paraded like this up and down the whole length of the corridor; I could see them whenever they passed the line of vision of my spy-hole. The warder was holding a whip, he called out, "Gee up!" at every step and laid on with it.

Manuel tittered and whimpered with pain by turns. After having traversed the corridor three times, horse and driver went out into the empty, dark patio. I could hear the crack of the whip and Manuel's whimpers. Then they came back.

This was about eleven. I waited for the executions to begin and once again it so happened that I fell asleep before they began.

Next day I heard that three prisoners had actually been executed. But the lad had not screamed. Perhaps they had made him drunk on the brandy.

As a consequence of this scene I decided afresh not to touch any food, and also to try not to drink any water. I was convinced that this time the effects of starvation would be bound to make themselves felt sooner—it was ten days since I had begun to take food again, and before that I had fasted for exactly ten days; then there was the fact that I had cut down my hours of sleep and was smoking heavily. I was determined to hold out now until, one way or another, I got out of this slaughter-house.

I drank nothing for seven days and ate nothing for fifteen, from April 25th to May 9th. But fate had obviously ordained that all my efforts should be made ridiculous; the second hunger strike proved in the event as superfluous as the first. The "happy ending" came quite undramatically and independently of any action on my part; all my desperate efforts proved to have been mere tilting against wind-mills. I felt with the unfortunate youth in Petronius's "Satyricon"—"This world is not a pleasant place; you jump and scamper and torment yourself like a mouse in a chamber-pot."

Or something like that. . . .

Monday, April 26th.[1]

Hungry the whole day. This time much worse than the first time. Was summoned to the office this evening. Two

[1]In the meantime I had so perfected my code that I no longer needed to write "heart" for "stomach" and could write down practically everything I wanted.

well-fed gentlemen from the Press Department in Salamanca greeted me very courteously, and gave me another letter from my wife.

The contents are a little more revealing than those of the first letter. She writes that she "was astonished to find how many friends we have", and that she "not only hopes, but has a definite feeling that I shall not have to wait very long now for my release".

This last no doubt is only a pious wish, but the first indicates that a campaign of protest has been got going.

The letter had been forwarded to Salamanca through the mediation of the Archbishop of Westminster.

But it is evident from the letter that my wife, despite all efforts, has not succeeded in discovering where I am. What object can the Franco authorities have in concealing my whereabouts? One more reason for holding out now. In a fortnight at the most I shall be a wreck and they will have to take me to hospital.

The two gentlemen from the Press Department said I might write an answer to the letter, and discreetly suggested that I should write to say how well I was being treated. I had the impression that they would not forward the letter and were merely trying to get a statement out of me. I wrote: "Up till now I have been treated properly in prison and have nothing to complain of."

They took the letter away with them, promising that it would be in my wife's hands within a week.

(*It never arrived, of course.*)

Tuesday, April 27th.

Endless rainy day. Carlos still here. Both Spaniards in a very bad humour ever since our money gave out. Quarrel the whole time. As a result of fasting I, too, have become very irritable, but take care to keep a hold on myself.

Wednesday, April 28th.

The Consul came to-day.

He said the British Government were taking a friendly interest in my case and he had received instructions to do what he could for me. Questions had been put in the House of Commons. My wife had moved heaven and earth to obtain my release. The Foreign Office had enquired of Franco what charge had been preferred against me, but Franco had refused to answer on the ground that my case was still *sub judice.*

Sub judice is good. First they declare to me and the world that I have been sentenced to death by court martial. Then all of a sudden my case is *sub judice,* and they haven't once brought me up for examination, not once.

I don't know what to make of it all; the Consul also doesn't seem to know. I asked him whether Franco had given a formal assurance that I should not be shot. He said that to his knowledge no such assurance had been given so far. I don't even know whether this new turn of events with regard to my case being *sub judice* is favourable or not. Probably Franco finds the stir the case has caused disagreeable, and his people want to stage a formal trial to condemn me "correctly". They'll work up the material that I published with regard to the German pilots so that it will be sufficient to procure a sentence by court martial.

In short, I'm no wiser than I was before.

What I fear most is lest Queipo should turn the whole thing into a question of prestige, possibly even in relation to Franco. Salamanca seems to have protected me against Queipo up till now; but I'm in Seville and not in Salamanca.

The Consul promised to come every week and to let me know the moment he had any news from the Foreign Office. I asked him for various little things: money, a chess-board, books—he promised to bring them next time. We talked for nearly an hour.

Afterwards the warder showed me the visitors' room.

It is a big hall with a kind of iron cage in the middle. The prisoners who are receiving visitors crouch on the ground in the cage. Round the cage is an empty space of about five paces deep; the other side of this the wives of the prisoners squat on the ground and shout across at them. There are at least a hundred people in the room at a time. I couldn't understand how the couples ever managed to make each other hear amid the general hullabaloo. The visits last ten minutes. Each prisoner may be visited once a week.

Thursday, April 29th.

Racked my brains the whole day over what the Consul told me. Postulated all kinds of theories, but came to no conclusion.

While we were out in the patio we heard an explosion from the direction of the town. All the windows rattled and we saw, some miles away, an enormous column of smoke slowly rising upwards.

Later we heard from the warder that a shoe factory had blown up from some unexplained cause. All the hands, two hundred of them, dead.

It was the Phalangist with pince-nez who told us the story. He added the wise commentary: "You see, there were two hundred of 'em—and here you all make a devil of a fuss if we pot off five or six of you."

Then he added that the day after next was May 1st and would no doubt be "solemnly celebrated".

Friday, April 30th.

Pangs of hunger the whole time; thirst even worse. Feel ill and very wretched; my heart beats like a drum. Torrential rain. Carlos, who has learned that Johnnie has been released, is livid with rage. Yesterday he declared a hunger strike, but started eating again to-day—he said the

smell of coffee so titillated his nostrils that he could not hold out.

The last few nights have been quiet. But we all dread May 1st.

Saturday, May 1st.

Thank God, the night was quiet.

This afternoon, while the four of us were walking about in the patio, three *Requetes* officers appeared in the doorway. Captain Bligh was conducting them; he pointed a finger at us, and was obviously explaining who we were. We felt like animals in a zoo. The officers riveted their gaze on us, postured like elegant dandies, and struck their riding boots with their whips. It was far the most humiliating experience I have hitherto been through, more humiliating even than being photographed in the street in Malaga.

Sunday, May 2nd.

This night, too, quiet.

I am considerably weaker. Felt too ill to go out into the patio; lay on my bed the whole day. Have grown terribly thin—arms and legs only skin and bone now, like those of a mummy. This evening couldn't stand the thirst any longer—had drunk nothing for a week—and drank a whole litre of wine which I had saved up. Result what might have been expected. In addition smoked thirty-two cigarettes to-day. If I can keep this up much longer, I shall be able to earn my living in future as a "fasting man" at a fair.

Monday, May 3rd.

The whole day in bed, except for one hour in the late afternoon. In the evening Angelito brought me a second blanket and a kind of pillow. Unable to read.

I think I'll soon be bad enough now to get myself taken before the doctor.

Tuesday, May 4th.

Last night they shot another eight.

I didn't hear anything of it myself; learned of it to-day through other channels.

Lie all day long on my bed, dozing.

Three days now since I was in the patio.

Wednesday, May 5th.

Late last night Carlos was transferred to my cell. A new batch of prisoners; the prison is overcrowded.

We were tremendously pleased and talked the whole night. I had to let Carlos into the secret of my hunger strike, since he can see me getting rid of my food. From now on he will eat up my rations.

This morning we were both transferred to Cell 17.

It is situated on the other side of the corridor; the window looks out on to the "beautiful patio". When we looked out of the window for the first time this morning and caught sight of flower-beds and green trees, it all seemed like a fairy tale. The flowers and trees of course are not exactly impressive—the "beautiful patio" looks rather like one of the wretched parks in a working-class district. But the main thing is that the trees and flowers have *colours*. I became suddenly aware that we are all of us here living in a world made up of the two shades, black and grey, like the world of the film. To continue the analogy: the "beautiful patio" had the same effect on me as a coloured film, the sight of which only later on makes one aware of the monotony of the black and grey technique.

I made a little test to see whether it was only I who reacted so violently to these things, or whether my reaction was typical of prison existence. I said not a word to Carlos about my delight, but he began of himself to say how marvellous the flowers and trees were and almost clapped his hands for joy like a child.

The move had taken so much out of me that I lay down on my bed again after it and could scarcely breathe. To-day is the eleventh day of fasting. My appearance has reached an almost theatrical degree of emaciation; Carlos will bear me out. The *jefe*—Scarface—made an inspection of the cell after breakfast and the sight of me at last had the desired effect. He had me taken before the doctor.

The doctor—a military doctor with the rank of Colonel and obviously a specialist at detecting malingering—asked me what was the matter with me. I said something or other about *angina pectoris* and two attacks. He listened to my heart; prescribed no smoking and milk instead of coffee —that was all.

Carlos was very disappointed at the meagre result. He said it wasn't worth fasting twenty-one days for that. Just wait, I said, we're not dead yet. We were both somewhat horror-struck at this ominous phrase.

Lucky that the two of us are here together. No one can find out whether I smoke or not. As a matter of fact am now smoking a little less, twenty a day. After each cigarette the cardiac muscle beats out a tattoo.

The criminals in the patio are a curious bunch. Three murderers, five or six burglars, a real Sierra bandit—the rest swindlers and petty delinquents. They don't play football and don't dash about like the politicos; they are a sedate, serious lot. They despise the politicos and talk with no hint of pity of the executions. They live an ordered life, secure, unmenaced—an idyllic existence. We were able to talk to them through the window with perfect ease, there's no taboo line here. They all cursed the war—since it has begun things have become so uncomfortable in prison. They're quite nice to me; they don't care for Carlos because he's an officer.

"Serves you right," one of them said, "if you had stayed at home and lived a nice sober existence, you wouldn't have been in jug."

Thursday, May 6th.

Yesterday they took away the electric bulbs from our cell. There is a shortage of electric bulbs in the prison and in the whole of Seville. The warder explained to us that he needed the bulbs for the cells of the "*incomunicados*" and "*ojos*". "You," he said, "are well-behaved chaps; there's no need to keep an eye on you any longer."

We felt highly flattered. We now belong to the patrician class of the prison, the warders talk to us in intimate, familiar tones about their duties, we are members of the family. That is the way to get on.

What luck that there are two of us now that there's no light. Carlos was furious at first when I woke him up at three in the morning and announced that we would now converse until breakfast-time. But ever since he has been able, like me, to sleep through the critical hours, he blesses my dodge.

Carlos still goes out into the patio from one to three o'clock; he is my liaison with the outer world. I hear from him that our two friends are in a very bad humour and are constantly at loggerheads. For months they have been stuck together like Siamese twins; in sleep, in waking, in the performance of the most intimate functions.

But there have been no executions for the last three nights.

Friday, May 7th.

Was taken to the doctor this morning for the second time. He shook his head as he looked at me and was furious, because my symptoms do not fit in with any of the forms of malingering known to him. Was chiefly irritated at my answering, each time he asked me how I felt in myself, that I felt perfectly well, that it was not at my request that I had been brought before him and that he could not help me, since there was no drug that could cure *angina pectoris*. I thought that, in view of the unmistakable symptoms of my condition, the man would at least feel some alarm

at the thought of his responsibility and put me in hospital. I really look quite fantastic—like a walking skeleton out of a Walt Disney cartoon. When I was taken across the corridor to visit the doctor, all eyes were turned on me in horror.

But I was out of luck. After long reflection the doctor told me to show him my tongue. It was as white as though I had dipped it in flour. This gave him a sudden inspiration.

"I knew it," he roared jubilantly to his assistants. "The man is taking ether."

I enquired with a grin where he imagined I could get hold of ether.

He said that doubtless the criminals smuggled it in to me through the window.

I fancy he had sent for my record and had come upon the part about the hypodermic syringe. And perhaps, too, the "women's stockings".

But the affair had very unpleasant consequences. Carlos and I were moved to Cell 30, which looks out on the big patio. Our mattresses and clothes were slashed about to see if any ether could be discovered. Conscious of my innocence, I began to protest more and more loudly, and Carlos backed me up. Finally I staged a real fit of fury which, owing to the ragged state of my nerves, was only half put on. Half a dozen warders came running up and "Scarface" was literally green with rage; but none of them dared to touch us. I fancy this was due to the effect of Carlos's presence; the spirit of Mussolini no doubt hovers invisibly in the cell with arms spread out protectively.

Since they found nothing, they confined themselves to boarding up the window to prevent ether being smuggled in. Now we sit all day in the dark and sing "*Gaudeamus igitur*" and Austrian student songs—we both studied for a term or two at Vienna University.

I apologised to Carlos for involving him in this mess, but he said that the affair was just beginning to amuse him. Besides, he gets double rations.

While he eats I wrap my head in the blanket so as not to hear or see anything of it. To-day is the thirteenth day.

Carlos is a boon. I do not know how I should have borne the last few days without him.

He has cut out a fresh swastika from cigarette-paper and the rebel flag from a match-box cover and wears them both together in his button-hole.

Saturday, May 8th.

I was brought up for examination for the first time.

At one o'clock, when Carlos had gone out into the patio, I dozed off with weakness. This was in contravention of my iron rule as regards sleep, but I am now so weak that I fall asleep without realizing it as I sit, sometimes even in the midst of talking.

At half-past one I was awakened by the opening of the cell door. The "*Venga*"—come—rang out in more cold, official tones than I had heard for a long time.

They took me to the office. In the office were an officer and a uniformed shorthand typist. My greeting was ignored and I was not offered a seat.

I knew at once that this was the military examiner. I had visualized this scene for long enough beforehand.

I said that I was ill and must sit down; that I would refuse to answer any questions until they brought me a chair. The officer shrugged his shoulders and had a chair brought in.

He had a thick file of documents before him; while he was opening it I managed to read the inscription on the cover; my name, and, in brackets, the offence with which I was charged.

"*Auxilio de rebelión militar,*" it read.

For "affording aid to armed rebellion" there was, I knew, only one possible sentence before Franco's courts martial: death. Nevertheless I felt relieved. The fact that they had on their own initiative dropped the charge of spying seemed to me a very favourable omen.

The examination lasted some two hours. Almost half an

hour of this was taken up by the examiner in trying to get me to admit that the "News Chronicle" was a Communist paper. The man's ignorance was astounding. He was convinced that a paper which took up a loyal attitude to the legal Spanish Government was bound to be Communist. The examination developed into an argument. Then, when he realized that he was giving himself away, he turned nasty.

The remaining questions related to my first visit to Seville, my journey to Malaga, etc. I had no desire to go into the personal psychological reasons that had moved me to stay in Malaga. I said that Miss Helena had already taken a note of all that.

In everything I said I kept to the truth, except on one point: to the question as to where I had obtained the material for my first book on Spain, I alleged that the "League for the Rights of Man" and other liberal organisations friendly to the Government had placed the material at my disposal; I had then put my signature to this data, trusting in the good faith of those organisations. All this was a lie; had I told the truth it might have cost several people in rebel territory their heads.

He asked me what sort of people the "secret wire-pullers of the Red Propaganda" in England were.

I named a list of twenty-five to thirty names that appear on appeals and notices of public meetings, all university professors and titled people, from knights upwards. When I came to "Her Grace the Duchess of Atholl" he had had enough.

At the conclusion of the examination he said:

"When you were in National territory the first time, you weren't arrested?"

"No," I said.

"Extraordinary," he said.

And so it ended.

I came away from the examination very satisfied. At the beginning I had been very much afraid; the stupidity of the examiner had restored my self-confidence.

I related the whole story to Carlos with great gusto. He was a bad audience and grew more jumpy every minute. At last he said that he couldn't understand how I could be so cheerful after having discovered that I was to be charged with "aiding the military rebellion"; and that it was "absolutely ghastly."

This, of course, was sufficient to damp my spirits thoroughly, and I sat down to write a hurried S O S to the Consul.

When the Consul had first come to see me we had settled on a danger signal; if I underlined the date it would mean "S O S ".

I wrote a letter containing nothing of importance, and underlined the date.

Sunday, May 9th.

Carlos has fairly got the wind up me. He paces about the cell and I realize that he already looks upon me as a dead man. He treats me with an exaggerated respect and consideration that gets on my nerves. I have always preferred a harsh nurse to a sympathetic one. Pity is the echo of one's own misery and increases that misery fourfold.

Monday, May 10th.

The Consul came. He, too, appeared to be somewhat disquieted by the fact that I had been brought up for examination. It had still been impossible to obtain from Franco an assurance that he would not have me shot. He said, it is true, that he did not think my death was of such importance to Franco that he would risk offending the Foreign Office, but this was somewhat vague comfort. I asked if there were no possibility of my being exchanged with a prisoner of the Valencia Government, but he said that at the present stage he did not think it likely.

During our conversation I noticed that at short intervals I kept feeling dizzy and was unable to remember what had

just been said. After fifteen days of fasting this was probably not to be wondered at. But I must have made an odd impression on him, and it seemed to me that he looked at me several times in astonishment and some irritation.

As a result I have decided to start eating again. The main thing now is to keep a clear head at my trial.

And if this proves of no use, at least to cut a good figure.

Tuesday, May 11th.

Astonishing how quickly one picks up strength by eating again.

Was in the patio to-day for the first time for a week. Horrified at the appearance of the two Spaniards. They had heard from Carlos yesterday that my trial was approaching and they hailed me with simulated heartiness. They said that it would be just the same with me as with them—I should be sentenced but not shot. Besides, they said, I had already been sentenced by court martial and not shot, and that made me immune from a second sentence; it was like being inoculated against cholera.

All the time they were speaking I could not help thinking of how we had talked to Nicolás the day before he was executed.

I realize with surprise how comparatively safe I have been feeling all these last weeks. Now the button-counting will begin all over again, and the obsessive dance on the flagstones: if I tread in the middle, all will be well, but if I tread on the lines. . . .

There is nothing in the tenets of even the gloomiest monastic order which condemns a man to endure purgatory, and then, when it is all over, sends him back to hell.

Wednesday, May 12th.

Ten minutes ago I was told to pack my things, for I was going to be released.

I have put my toothbrush in my pocket.

Carlos is out in the patio. . . .

X

This is a story without a climax.

For days on end we waited for the fall of Malaga as for the last act of a tragedy—and when Malaga fell we were not aware of it.

During the two months of my solitary confinement in Seville, I watched the football players in the courtyard—and did not know that at night they were shot.

Twice, for a total period of twenty-six days, I tormented myself with hunger and thirst; the object I wished to attain was each time rendered pointless by a strange freak of circumstance, and those against whom I waged this silent battle were not aware of it.

Death tripped down the corridor, changing step, struck out here and there, danced pirouettes; often I felt his breath on my face when he was miles away; often I fell asleep and dreamed while he stood leaning over my bed.

This is a confused story without a definite thread, without climax or anti-climax. The corpses are not, as is fitting, piled up at the end of the act; they lie about, evenly distributed, here, there and everywhere.

When there seemed to be only two possibilities, life-long imprisonment or death, the door suddenly opened and I stumbled into freedom like a blind man into the light.

Often I wake at nights and think I am still in No. 41 and that it is not the Thames, at Shepperton, Middlesex, that runs past my window but the white taboo line in the great, dark patio.

Still more often I dream that I must return to No. 41 because I have left something behind there. Something or other, I don't know what.

What was it, what have I forgotten? I must go back once again and take a last look round before the steel door falls to; this time not before, but behind, me.

The notes of the last post in the courtyard still ring in my ears.

Soon it will be night and evening has scarcely begun. In this country darkness falls the moment the sun has gone; there is no such word as "evening" in the Spanish language. The short span of twilight which replaces evening is not a gentle dying away of the day, but the beginning of night.

In this brief span, while the shadows swiftly glide along the walls and fill the patio with darkness, the last post is sounded.

Whilst the bugler sounds it, all is still in the courtyard. The prisoners stand to attention in a square. The sharp lines which suffering has seared into their faces are softened by the twilight. They listen to the bugler's notes, many of them open-mouthed; it is the only music they ever hear.

The bugler's last note goes on vibrating for a while. Until it has completely died away, the line of men stands to attention. The warder listens with head thrust forward to hear whether the last thin lingering note has ceased; then he blows his whistle.

The square turns right about, and at a second whistle closes up and forms fours. Five minutes later the patio is dark and deserted.

Sometimes cats howl. When it is wet, the stars are reflected in the puddles. At full moon walls and gravel are a chalky white and the cell windows yawn like black holes, emitting snores and groans.

There is a curious mechanism at work within us which romanticises the past; the film of past experiences is coloured by the memory. It is a very primitive process, and the colours run into one another; maybe that is why they are so fairy-like.

In a word, even though he may not admit it, every prisoner is homesick for his cell.

And what is even stranger: he has a feeling of having never been *so* free as there.

This is a really remarkable thing, and one difficult to explain. But there is a very vivid and real feeling behind it: the feeling of irresponsibility.

Our life was, of course, an unusual one compared with normal prison life; the constant nearness of death weighed down and at the same time lightened our existence.

Most of us were not afraid of death, only of the act of dying; and there were even moments in which we overcame even this fear. At such moments we were *free*—men without shadows, dismissed from the ranks of the mortal; it was the most complete realization of freedom that can be granted a man.

These moments do not return, and when one is back on the treadmill again it is they that inspire one with the feeling that one has forgotten something in cell No. 41.

Those Militiamen in the great patio were really amateurs in the art of warfare. They had themselves been at the front, and yet they believed in miracles. Every day fresh news of victory went the rounds; to-day Toledo had been won back, next day Córdoba or Vitoria.

I was never able to discover the source of these rumours. They made the rounds of the prison, they were dropped in notes out of windows, they were whispered in the corridors. Was there someone in the building who purposely invented these stories of victory? Did those who passed them on believe in them, or did they only behave as if they believed?

Children sometimes stand before a mirror and make faces to frighten themselves. These prisoners did exactly the opposite. They were niggardly of their feelings for each other, were without sentimentality, sometimes without pity. But they fed each other's hopes because they could not bear to die without hope and in a lost cause. To-day Toledo fell, the next day Burgos and Seville; they lied themselves to death as children cry themselves to sleep.

Only on one point was their information exact. Each

of the thirteen hundred men in the prison knew how many had been shot the night before.

The criminals in the "beautiful patio" were nearly all of them bad cases. They resembled one another to an astonishing degree, although their heads were not all shaven and although they wore no uniform. They resembled each other just as old married couples resemble each other and old butlers resemble their masters.

I was only a quarter of a year in prison, but this period sufficed to give me some idea of the force of this process of protective coloration. From the very first day I felt that my new situation demanded of me a quite definite attitude, just as barrack-life demands a quite definite attitude, and life in the colonies demands a quite definite attitude. The first time the warder put the broom into my hands, I assumed automatically and without conscious reflection on my part an air of distinguished incompetence, although during long years of bachelordom I had acquired a considerable degree of skill in the handling of a broom. The rôle I had to play in this building—the rôle of an innocent abroad—came to me automatically, and gradually, during the following weeks and months, became a mask, which did not require any consciously histrionic attitude on my part. This automatic transformation astonished *me* more than anyone. I was able to observe in a living example what direct biological force this process of protective coloration exerts.

Guilty or innocent, the prisoner changes form and colour, and assumes the mould that most easily enables him to secure a maximum of those minimal advantages possible within the framework of the prison system. In the world outside, now faded to a dream, the struggle is waged for position, prestige, power, women. For the prisoner those are the heroic battles of Olympian demi-gods. Here inside the prison walls the struggle is waged for a cigarette, for

permission to exercise in the courtyard, for the possession of a pencil, for a bath or a shave. It is a struggle for minimal and unworthy objects, but a struggle for existence like any other. With this difference, that the prisoner has only one weapon left to him: cunning and hypocrisy developed to the point of reflex action. Of all other means he has been deprived. The hearing and sense of touch of a man who has been blinded are intensified; there is only one direction in which the prisoner can evolve—that of increasing artfulness. In the hot-house atmosphere of his social environment he cannot escape this fateful transformation of his character. He feels his claws growing, a furtive and dejected, an impudent and servile, look creeps into his eyes; his lips become thin, sharp, Jesuitical, his nose pinched and sharp, his nostrils dilated and bloodless, as in the death-mask of the poet who wrote the Inferno. His knees sag, his arms grow long, and dangle gorilla-like. Those who uphold the theory of "race" and deny the influence of environment on the development of the human being should spend a year in prison and observe themselves daily in a mirror.

The usual idea of prison life can be expressed in the form of an equation:

Prison life is equal to normal life minus freedom.

This equation is all wrong. Stated correctly, it should be: normal life bears the same relation to prison life as life on the earth to life on the moon. Incomparable magnitudes are involved; earthly concepts lose all their meaning.

For example, the concept of monotony. Monotony, so it is said, is the distinguishing feature of prison life. While all the time life in a cell is one long chain of excitements.

What excitement the opening of the cell door always arouses afresh. The closing and opening of the door are the most momentous sounds for the prisoner: point and counterpoint of his existence.

The first thing he hears is the rattle of the bunch of keys outside; he reacts to this invariably with a quickened pulse. If the rattle comes at the regular feeding times, one of the three high-points of the day is reached; should it occur at an unwonted hour, it can mean anything, and the most marvellous and most terrible possibilities flash through the imprisoned mind. A letter? A visit? A reprieve? If the King in person were to be waiting outside in a golden coach to set him free, it would seem to the prisoner, in that interval between the rattling of the keys and the opening of the door, perfectly natural.

For the outside world has long since become as unreal and inconceivable to him as the life of a prisoner in an isolation cell is inconceivable to the man outside.

Long before I got to know Spain, I used to think of Death as a Spaniard. As one of those noble Señors painted by Velasquez, with black knee-breeches, Spanish ruff, and cool, courteously indifferent gaze. He must have been pretty disgusted when they shot the unshaven Nicolás. Indignant, he covered the little Militiaman's face with that mask of rigid dignity which is proper to the etiquette of his court.

There were thirteen hundred of us, his courtiers, in the Seville house of death. No liveried lackeys announced the approach of the noble Señor; the office of herald was performed by a greasy little priest and the introduction of novices was carried out in a subdued whisper.

I came face to face with him once or twice. He only offered me his finger-tips. "How do you do?" he murmured. "See you later," and passed on, followed by the priest, waving the sanctus bell.

He forgot his promise and did not come back; but *I* could not forget it and I thought of it the whole time—it is always thus when one associates with the great.

There were thirteen hundred of us courtiers of the great

Señor. We behaved boorishly. The simple peasants, in particular, those *pobres y humildes* with their uncouth manners, did not cut a good figure in the thin, tenuous air of the court. They appeared with full stomachs before the Señor, they stuffed themselves beforehand with beans; when they stood before his cool, bored countenance, they screamed with terror and called for help and for their mothers. Their behaviour was an infringement of court etiquette; they asked foolish questions as to the why and the wherefore, they even forgot themselves so far as to call the black, greasy fellow with his bell a clown. Some of them sang the songs of the people; sang them out of tune, in hoarse voices, and since they wept betweenwhiles, it sounded like belching. Even when the audience was over and the conventional rigid masks had been fitted on their faces, they did not make a good impression.

Nor did the atmosphere suit the others. The court librarian assumed the most grotesque bureaucratic manners; the officer evinced a most irregular sentimentality towards the Red mob; the man of facts became a moralist; the two friends who had been waiting together for months for their audience picked a quarrel in the very ante-chamber of the Señor. All averted their heads when someone else was writhing in agony; the fool they contemned and the dying they shunned.

The man with the sanctus bell, unworthy descendant of great ancestors, prattled of an ordeal that lay before all of us. We all failed in this ordeal, but it was not our fault.

We all asked ourselves, whilst we waited, trembling, for the audience, to whose advantage and renown it was that we should be kept thus on the rack; what palpable or secret meaning there was behind it all? The peasants asked themselves in their way, the officer in his way, the man of facts in his. We plagued our brains with this question until the grey substance became inflamed and sweated forth blood and tears. Not one of us knew the answer, least of all the man who rang the bell, the Señor's greasy majordomo.

Often I awake in the night with a feeling that I must return to Cell 41, because I have forgotten something there.

It is the answer that I have forgotten; sometimes it seems to me as though I knew it at that time, as though a faint breath of knowledge had brushed by me; but it has vanished irrevocably.

XI

BETWEEN THE SIESTA and the evening meal the cell door flew open and freedom was hurled at me like a club, I was stunned, and stumbled back into life just as, had things taken another course, I should have stumbled into death.

As I stood in the corridor I shook from head to foot, overpowered by the same nervous trembling as on that night when someone outside my cell had called for help.

All that happened in the next few moments is dim in my memory, the contours blurred as though seen through a dense fog.

On the Governor's desk burns a naked electric bulb. All round it quivers an aura of light, like that through which one sees a street lamp flickering in a fog. In the Governor's chair sits a stranger. He is wearing a black shirt, without a tie. He bows with exaggerated formality.

"Señor," the man in the black shirt says, "I am taking you away from here." Again I have to hold on to the table; I feel dizzy and feverish; eating heartily after the long period of fasting has thoroughly upset my system.

"Señor," says the man in the black shirt, "I cannot tell you where I am taking you, but don't be afraid, we are *caballeros*."

We go along the lighted corridor, I don't know what is being done with me, I walk in my sleep. We go back to my cell, I shake Carlos by the hand, he is as thunderstruck as I, the door falls to between us before we can say a word to each other. Again we walk along the corridor; the loose leaves of my diary drop out of my pocket. The man in the black shirt helps me to pick them up. "What have you got there, Señor?" On the top is my wife's letter stamped by the censor. "Private letters," I murmur. "You can keep them, Señor, we are *caballeros*." We go on down the corridor, open another cell door, I shake Byron and the consumptive by the hand. They are both horrified. "Where are they taking you?" "I don't know," I say. "God bless you," and the door falls to. We go on down the corridor and I shake hands—with Angel, Manuel the cripple, Don Ramón, Don Antonio.

Then we are back in the office.

"Señor," says the man in the black shirt, "we are now going to another town, and if you are prepared to promise certain things I may then be able to take certain steps to procure your release."

And he reaches out for pen and ink. When I see pen and ink, I wake up at once.

"My dear Sir," I say. "All this is so strange and so sudden. Who are you? What is this town you are taking me to? And what are these promises I am to make?"

"I would rather, Señor, not tell you my name. But we are *caballeros*; you can rely on us. We merely want you to promise that you will no longer meddle in the internal affairs of Spain. If you promise this, I may then be able to take certain steps to procure your release. But we are not going to force you, we are *caballeros*."

"I have never meddled in the internal affairs of Spain."

"You have engaged in a perfidious campaign against National Spain, Señor."

"I wrote what I saw and what I thought about it. I have never meddled in the internal affairs of Spain."

"I do not wish to argue with you, *Señor*. If you sign an undertaking that you will not meddle in the internal affairs of Spain I may then be able to take certain steps to procure your release."

I signed a declaration to the effect that I had no intention of meddling in the internal affairs of Spain. I wrote further that I had been treated correctly in the prison of Seville.

I learned later that my release was neither an act of mercy nor a political gesture on the part of Franco. I was being exchanged with a prisoner of the Valencia Government.

I learnt further details. The prisoner with whom I was exchanged was a certain Señora Haya, who was being held as a hostage in Valencia. The *caballero* in the black shirt was her husband, and one of Franco's most famous war pilots.[1]

Again we walked along the corridor, the man in the black shirt and I. A grille was pushed back, a key turned in the lock, a catch sprang back.

Outside was the street.

Cars and donkey-carts were driving along the street. The people on the pavement walked here, there and everywhere in disorder, and not four abreast. A man leaned against the wall reading a newspaper. A child sat in the dust eating grapes.

In the garden outside the prison gate the guards stood about flirting with young girls. Girls with black hair; with roses stuck behind their ears, just as in Carmen. They wore skirts. They were quite wonderful girls.

"Señor," said the man in the black shirt. "If you have no objection, we will get into this car."

We got into the car. At the back sat two discreet detectives.

[1] The *caballero* had been lying when he had said he "might be able to take steps to procure my release." The agreement with regard to the exchange had been signed twenty-four hours before, through the mediation of the British authorities. The declaration which I signed was obtained by blackmail. I have, nevertheless, kept my word. I have not returned as a newspaper man to Spanish territory, and I have refused invitations to speak about my experiences at political meetings.

These blackmailing tactics have developed into a regular system with the Spanish *caballeros*. Sir Peter, before his release, had to give his word of honour to say nothing of what he had seen and experienced after the rebel entry into Malaga.

I was luckier. The declaration put before me merely alluded to "meddling in Spanish internal affairs." To maintain silence with regard to my experiences was not part of my undertaking.

One plunged his hand into his pocket; I thought he was going to bring out handcuffs, but it was a silver cigarette case.

We drove across the Guadalquivir; on the Guadalquivir there were ships. They trailed smoke behind them like loosened pigtails. They flew many-coloured flags. One blew its siren.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"To another town," answered the man in the black shirt.

On the café terraces sat people reading newspapers and drinking coloured drinks. There was a deafening noise in the streets. We almost ran into a tram. Then we drove along an avenue and the town was left behind. We drew up in an empty field and alighted. The *caballero* and the two detectives stood about irresolutely. For one last time the thought went through my mind: now they're going to draw their revolvers and shoot me down; then I heard the humming of an engine and a small open monoplane appeared from behind the bushes and came rolling along towards us.

A mechanic jumped out and saluted. The man in the black shirt climbed into the pilot's seat; the mechanic helped me to get in beside him; the detectives each took a wing and pushed.

We rolled along right across the field; behind the bushes lay the aerodrome. A whole herd of steels aurians was grazing there with outspread wings.

The *caballero* took the joy-stick and the earth tipped over obliquely and sank into the depths at our feet.

We were in an improbably small machine, an open Baby Douglas, as fragile as a child's toy. We rose higher and higher, the horizon expanded, the city of Seville shrank. The *caballero* in the black shirt pursed his lips—I heard nothing, but could tell that he was whistling a tune to himself.

"Where are we going, Señor?" I yelled.

"To another town, Señor," he yelled back.

We rose higher and higher. A mountain loomed towards us. White shreds of mist floated round us on all sides. The *caballero* in the black shirt pointed to the abyss below.

"All this is National Spain, Señor," he yelled. "Here everyone is happy now."

"What?" I yelled.

" . . . happy," he yelled, "happy and free."

"What?" I yelled.

"Free."

We were silent, and only the engine thundered. The shreds of mist below us fused into a white plateau; the earth was no longer to be seen. The *caballero* sat with legs apart, the joy-stick between his knees, and gesticulated with his hands.

"On your side the poor fight against the rich. We have a new system. We do not ask whether a man is rich or poor, but whether he is good or bad. The good poor and the good rich are on one side. The bad poor and the bad rich on the other. That is the truth about Spain, Señor."

"How do you distinguish them?" I asked.

"What?" he yelled.

"How do you distinguish them?"

We soared again; by now we must have reached the other side of the mountain. The engine roared. For a while I could hear nothing.

"In their hearts all Spaniards are on our side," screamed the *caballero* in the black shirt. "When the Reds shoot our people, their last cry is our cry of '*Viva España*'. I have seen Reds being shot, and they too cried at the end '*Viva España*'. In the hour of death men speak the truth. You will see from this that I am right, Señor."

"Did you look?" I yelled.

"What?" he yelled back.

"I asked whether you looked?"

We hovered above the white plateau; we saw nothing but the white plateau below us and felt as though we were

hovering over one spot. The *caballero* sat with his legs apart and gesticulated with his hands; the engine worked by itself. We had no need to do anything, we simply sat there on a hovering raft above the clouds and looked down.

"When one sits here like this," yelled the man in the black shirt, "one thinks a good deal about life and death. The Reds are all cowards; they don't even know how to die. Can you imagine what it is like to be dead?"

"Before we were born, we were all dead," I yelled.

"What?" he yelled.

"I say before we were born we were all dead."

"That is true," he yelled. "But why, then, is one afraid of death?"

"I have never been afraid of death, but only afraid of dying," I yelled.

"With me it's exactly the opposite," yelled the man in the black shirt.

Rifts appeared in the white plateau below us. A gust of wind struck us, the 'plane trembled and began to gambol like a colt. The *caballero's* hands were once more occupied, and he was silent.

I felt feverish again. If the *caballero* were to make a false movement now, the earth would rush up at us and strike us dead. That would be a fine end, I thought, with a positively mythological touch about it. Death has no terrors, only dying—must that not be the same with everyone? But the *caballero* maintains that with him it is exactly the opposite. The *caballero* is a damned clever pilot; presumably he is also a damned fine bomb-thrower. Carlos too is an officer, and he too is not afraid of dying. But the thought of death paralysed his legs and left him as helpless as a child that has not yet learned to walk.

Carlos and the *caballero* both know how to die; they are officers; dying is their *métier*. It has been drilled into them, it is in their bones to die with an air.

Little Nicolás certainly did not die with an air. He was a civilian. The Militiamen in the patio were civilians too. They had no experience of dying. They were terribly afraid of dying. Up above the clouds circled the *caballero* and hurled bombs down on them with an air; they threw themselves on their stomachs and grovelled in the mud and were afraid. Often, when the machine-guns began to bark, they did the natural thing and ran away; before they were shot they called for help and for their mothers. They liked playing football, nibbling lettuce and dreaming of the time when they would be no more than three in a room, and be able to have meat twice a week, and buy themselves a Sunday suit and a watch, for when the war was over, life would really begin.

They died unredeemed, with the unredeemed pledge of life in their pockets; they refused to give life absolution. They believed that it was necessary to live, and even to fight in order to live, and even to die so that others might live. They believed in all this, and because they believed truly in it, because their lives depended on this belief, they were not afraid of death. But they were terribly afraid of dying. For they were civilians, soldiers of the people, soldiers of life and not of death.

I was there when they died. They died in tears, crying vainly for help, and in great weakness, as men must die. For dying is a confoundedly serious thing, one shouldn't make a melodrama of it. Pilate did not say "*Ecce heros*"; he said "*Ecce homo*".

We were hovering again. The *caballero* in the black shirt waved his arms afresh and yelled out metaphysical catchwords that were as insubstantial as the mist below us and caused as much palpable mischief as the bombs that he hurls below. I would gladly have thrown him out of the 'plane, but he was at the controls, and he was stronger than I.

EPILOGUE

The town to which the *caballero* in the black shirt had brought me was La Linea, the Spanish frontier town adjoining Gibraltar.

I had to wait forty-eight hours in the La Linea prison. On May 14th I trod British soil as a free man.

What became of Byron and the consumptive I do not know; I have reasons for not publishing their names. From private sources I heard some time ago that they were shot. Whether this is true I do not know.

Carlos should be free by now.

Twenty-four hours after his arrest, Sir Peter, thanks to the intervention of the officers of a British warship, was set at liberty. While still on board he telegraphed the news of my arrest to England. I have him to thank for the fact that my sentence by the Malaga court martial was not put into effect.

For my eventual release I have to thank those "kind friends" whom my wife found and of whom she wrote me in her letters. The majority of them I did not know and they did not even know me by name. They were individuals and organizations who bombarded Franco with telegrams and letters of protest; among them were fifty-eight English Members of Parliament, twenty-two of them Conservatives.

Many of them may not have cared for the things I wrote, in so far as they had read them; nevertheless they interceded for me.

From this the objective, impersonal significance of the whole affair became clear to me. I realized that the efforts that were made on my behalf were not in any way concerned with my personal merits, but were a trial of strength

between democratic public opinion, which has no material means of bringing pressure to bear, and Franco's dictatorial machine.

I had believed that I owed my life to Randolph Hearst and a set of dirty postcards; the fact that there are nevertheless other forces in this century which will come forward in the defence of justice is both objectively and subjectively consoling.

THE END