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

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

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

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

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

"And so-and-so?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The master expressed astonishment.

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

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

Guanes looked at this master with some surprise and then

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

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6. Pumpi's Career.

PAMPI's CAREER .

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

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

All the Veronicas, Gachuchas and Chanettas, and the hundred

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

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

remonstrances of his parents and taken himself a wife.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Heh, Panchika!"

"Hallo, Pampi!"

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

"Much obliged." With great agility she climbed up

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Certainly, with pleasure," the douaniers replied.

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

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

When they reached Espelette Pampi stopped the cart.

"Here you are, Gentlemen" he said.

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

"Why?" asked Pampi.

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

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

"Rot! What about the barrel?"

"It's empty!"

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

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

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

II.

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

The young smuggler congratulated himself ~~daily that~~

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

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

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

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

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

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

going to have a lodger.

Pampi could scarcely believe his ears.

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

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

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

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

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

fascination soon wore off in Pampi's case.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quack whose skill was famed throughout the district.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Panchika never gave him the opprotunity. "Do you think

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

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

III.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. The Dispute .

THE DISPUTE .

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

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

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

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

Manuel of course disputed Panchua's claim

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"An uneven player," observed the first.

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

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

"Wasn't it at Hasparren?"

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

"All the same, we beat them!"

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

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

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

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8. Three Children At Play .

THREE CHILDREN AT PLAY .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hiri! (For you!) Chemartin"

"Yo!" (Hit it!)

"Bego!" (Leave it!)

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

still-warm stone flags.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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9. HOME.

HOME.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10. The Absent One.

THE ABSENT ONE .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

are engaged."

"Has he been away long?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not much....except that Marie Louise of Hegbaldekoborda is getting married." replied someone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

happened to the other man?"

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

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

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

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