LOVE ABUNDING

A Novel

by

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Chapter I

THE HOMECOMING

In the wild southern mountains of the Central American republic of Costa Rica, a long, low farmhouse stood on a terrace overlooking a bowl-like valley among green hills. Shrubs with colorful foliage or brilliant flowers clustered around the dwelling, amid fruit and shade trees that rose above its roof of dull red tiles. From the broad veranda that stretched across the front of the house, one looked over a shady pasture to the vine-draped trees that lined the bank of the Aguas Claras, a mountain torrent whose limpid current rushed, unseen but not unheard, down a rocky channel. Only at one point, far downstream, could it be glimpsed sparkling in the sunshine. Plantations of coffee, bananas and plantains occupied the remainder of the level valley and extended up the encircling slopes. To the north the verdant hills, pressing close to the stream, rose ridge above ridge, leading the eye upward to a rocky pinnacle that peeped over the last wooded summit. Downstream, lower spurs of the enclosing hills pushed out to the river, forming a narrow gorge through which it flowed into the wider valley of the Rio General.

On a bright morning toward the end of September of the year 1947, the farmhouse of Selva Alegre bustled with activity, as though preparing for some honored guest. From time to time, someone would emerge from the house to look over the narrow valley in front, usually concentrating his gaze upon a short stretch of road-
way that was visible through the trees, just above the spur that
closed in the bowl to the south. These surveys became more fre-
quent as the morning grew older and the fat white clouds, massing
outward from the highest summits in the north, covered more and
more of the blue sky, presaging the afternoon downpour. Sometimes,
the watcher was a tall, clean-shaven man with graying hair, who
was evidently the plantation's owner. At other times a middle-aged
woman, who appeared to be his wife, would come, drying her hands
on her apron as though she had just emerged from the kitchen, to
peer eagerly down the valley. Once two slender young women, one
with dark tresses and the other fair, came hand in hand to look
for the expected traveller.

"What can have happened to those boys?" William Fernley, the
locally known as Don Guillermo, plantation's master, exclaimed impatiently as the last patches of
clear sky were disappearing behind the encroaching clouds, like
blue eyes veiled by slowly closing lids. "If they are not here in
half an hour, they will be drenched."

"I hope there has been no accident," said Hazel, his wife,
joining him on the porch. "So many things can happen on the long
journey from the United States to El General. A mother cannot
help feeling anxious when her eldest son travels by air. Only
yesterday we read of that terrible aeroplane crash in Brazil."

"I should have gone to the village myself to meet Edwin, in-
stead of sending Harold to bring back his brother. Then, if there
had been any mishap—any failure to make connections, let us say—
I might have made the necessary arrangements."
"But the round-trip to Ureña tires you now, William. You are not as young as when you made this farm a quarter of a century ago. That's why I suggested that you send Harold with the horses to fetch Edwin. Although we persist in thinking of Harold as the baby of the family, he is nearly nineteen, a young man quite capable of doing all that is necessary."

"Look, here they come!" exclaimed the fair-haired girl, who had unobtrusively joined her parents.

"What sharp eyes you have, Violet!" said her father, admiringly. "But why is there only one rider with two led horses?"

"Here they are, Don Guillermo," said the dark-haired girl, pushing them into Mr. Fernley's hands.

"Thank you, Elvira," he murmured as he focused them on the distant roadway. "It's only Virgilio returning with the pack-horses that took the coffee to the beneficio. It's still too early to be concerned."

Yet evidently William Fernley was too concerned to return to the book he had been reading. Taking his hat and an umbrella, he walked down the road that led from the isolated farm to the outside world. The mother and daughter returned to complete their preparations for the meal, wondering now whether their choicest dishes would not be spoiled by the delay. They had spared no effort to prepare a feast worthy to celebrate the homecoming of the son and brother who was returning from his studies at a northern uni-
versity. Three long years had passed since they last saw him.

Elvira Trevana, the lovely, dark-haired girl of twenty-one whose father owned Santa Teresa, the next farm down the valley of the Aguas Claras, stayed on the porch, watching. A quarter of an hour after the false alarm, she rushed into the kitchen, exclaiming:

"Here they come! There's no doubt this time. I recognized both of them through the glasses. The white horse is laden with Edwin's suitcases."

Ten minutes later, just as the heavy ceiling of dark clouds let down its first, big, warning drops, the travellers reached the gate beside the house. Edwin had dismounted to greet and walk beside his father, leading his horse. He dropped the reins to fly into his waiting mother's arms.

"How happy I am to have my boy back again!" she exclaimed, embracing him tenderly. "I hope that this time he will stay."

"It's wonderful to be home again, and I intend to remain for a good while."

Turning to his sister Violet, he gave her an affectionate kiss.

"Elvira has come to help us welcome you home," she said.

Elvira, who had stood behind the others, now stepped forward. Edwin's heart leapt up as he looked into the beautiful face of the young woman who had been his childhood playmate. For an instant he stood perplexed, not knowing what to do. A formal handshake would contrast too sharply with his warm greeting of his mother and sister. He wished to make her feel that she belonged to the family with which she had spent so much time. So, impulsively, he kissed
her just as he had kissed Violet. Then, covered with embarrass-
ment, he turned aside to exchange greetings with the farm people
who had gathered around to welcome him. Alberto Elizondo, the
foreman, was frank and cordial, and his eldest son, Amado, greeted
Edwin like a returning brother; but the shy younger children
would not shake hands until their parents pushed them forward.

"I believe that you have grown taller these last three years,
Edwin, and you have certainly become broader," said his mother.
"You are a little taller than your father. And what a coat of
ten your canoe trip has given you! We have endless things to say
to each other, but first I suppose you would like to wash and get
ready for lunch. You must be ravenously hungry. You will find your
room much as you left it. We tried to keep everything just as you
had it."

"You are so considerate, Mother. But first let me help to
unload my baggage."

He started toward the horses, but Beto Elizondo was ahead
of him, already deftly untying the knots that held the load.
"No, no, we will attend to that," he said in Spanish. "You should
not work on the very day you return from so long an absence. There
will be plenty to do later."

Edwin thanked Harold for going to meet him, and affectionately
patted the horse he had ridden. As the two brothers stood side by
side, the contrast between them was striking. Edwin was taller
and more slender, with finely modelled features, brown hair, and
thoughtful gray eyes. Harold was stockier; although two inches shorter and nearly four years younger, he was already heavier. His hair was darker, his eyes brown, and his features broader. His movements were swifter and more decisive. He seemed cut out to be the energetic man of action; his elder brother, the thoughtful scholar.

As Edwin passed through the garden to the house, he rapidly took note of a number of changes that had been made while he was away, but when he reached his bedroom he found that it was hardly altered. There were the same pictures on the wall, the same books on the shelves that he had made for himself. Even the curious royal flycatcher's nest, that he had found hanging above a forest stream and with great exertion managed to secure after the young had flown, hung on the wall where he had placed it, robbed of its freshness by the years. On his bedside table was a large vase of flowers, including a spray of teritos, bizarre orchids of the genus Stanhopea, whose strong, spicy fragrance filled the room. He was fond of such exotic woodland odors. And there, too, was the very book he had been reading on his last day at home, Belt's *A Naturalist in Nicaragua*, with the bookmark where he had left it.

With a surge of emotion, he realized how much he had missed his home, and how much he had been missed, during his long absence in the North. His education had not been gained without sacrifices, by himself and, he now suspected, even more by those who loved him. Swallowing a lump that rose in his throat and blinking to dispel the tears that persisted in welling into his eyes, he washed his
face and hands, changed his shirt, and combed his hair for lunch.

The rain was falling hard as the family gathered around the table, decked, in honor of his arrival, with a gleaming white table-cloth instead of the economical flowered oilcloth that usually covered it. The parents sat at the ends of the table, with Edwin and Elvira on one side, Harold and Violet on the other. Elvira's father, Don Mariano Trevana Hernández, had been invited for the occasion but could not come. Edwin noticed with pleasure old favorites that he had not tasted for years: baked plantains, orange-colored pejibayes from a spiny palm tree, and hot tortillas fresh from the comal.

"Today we welcome the return of two wanderers," announced Mr. Fernley. "This morning I saw the first Baltimore oriole of the season, a splendid male in orange and black, doubtless the same one that lived among our shade trees all last winter. For him we put out a banana. For the wanderer who was absent longer, a more varied repast has fittingly been prepared."

"Who do you think started southward first?" asked Elvira, who spoke English with just enough foreign accent to give her speech a peculiar charm.

"The oriole, I am sure," replied Edwin. "I came most of the way in an airplane at over two hundred miles an hour. Probably an oriole cannot maintain a speed of more than about thirty or forty miles, and it must stop from time to time to eat."

"Did you have any trouble on the way?" asked Mrs. Fernley.

"When noon approached and you had not yet arrived, we could not help becoming slightly worried. September is not the safest time
to travel in Central America."

"From New Orleans we had a lovely flight over the Gulf in the moonlight and struck good weather yesterday morning in Guatemala, where I changed to a smaller 'plane. But when we reached San José early yesterday afternoon, clouds hid the La Sabana airfield, and we could not come down. We circled around and around, and I feared we might crash into one of the neighboring mountains, but I suppose that the pilot knew what he was doing. Finally, after about half an hour, the clouds parted just enough to reveal a corner of the landing field. The pilot skillfully slipped down through the gap, and we landed without mishap. As we left the 'plane, I heard him say that he was tired, and that if we had been delayed another five minutes, he would have proceeded straight to Panamá. That would have been most inconvenient for me, and you would have wondered what had happened. Instead of flying from San Isidro, Capital to Guetta, as we always used to do, I decided to come by bus over the new highway, as I wished to see what it is like. It is a marvellous feat of road making. For a long way it goes almost along the continental divide, closely following the old horse trail that Father and I travelled over once. Coming down from El Cerro de la Muerte into the basin of El General, the highway is cut into slopes so precipitous that I wondered how the surveyors managed to hang on while they staked out the route. Our bus was delayed while a bulldozer cleared away a fresh rock-slide that blocked the road. That made us late."
"Nevertheless, we should have been here much sooner, if you had not persisted in riding so slowly," remarked Harold.

"Callip is showing his years. We must not push him too hard," Edwin explained.

"Callip has been slow ever since you began to ride him," said Harold. "You would never use spurs but always let him do just as he pleased. My Prince goes twice as fast. I didn't stand for any nonsense when I was training him."

"People differ in their methods of training their horses, just as in their methods of raising their children. And as we train our steeds, so must we ride them," interposed Mr. Fornley in a conciliatory tone.

"I like a horse who is gentle and friendly and comes when he is called, even if he is a bit slow," remarked Violet.

"So do I," agreed Elvira. "And he should have a flowing mane, a tail that reaches his fetlocks, and a glossy coat of bay or chestnut. Horses appear to have been made not only to be ridden or worked, but also to be admired for their beauty and grace. Most of the country people around here seem not to care how their horses look; and often they spoil their appearance by docking their tails or cutting off their manes, except an ugly little tuft that they leave standing up on the withers, to grasp as they mount. I know that the lives of many of our neighbors are so poor and hard that they can scarcely afford to cultivate a taste for beauty; yet it is a pity that they must spoil the natural grace of the things they have."

"Have another roll, before they get cold," said Mrs. Fornley, passing the basket in which they were wrapped in a white cloth. "At least our neighbors do not eat their horses, even if
they sometimes work them to death," said Edwin. "I was shocked to find horseflesh appearing on the menus of restaurants in the States with increasing frequency since the war. And they even use horses for dog food."

"When I was a boy and young man in the United States," remarked Mr. Fernley, "I never heard of Americans eating horse meat, although I knew that certain Europeans did so. In English-speaking countries, the horse was regarded as a noble animal, the sharer of man's toil and risks in battle, who deserved a better fate than to be eaten when he could work no longer."

"But why is it worse to eat a horse than an ox, who also shares men's toil?" asked Harold.

"Logically, I suppose it is no more reprehensible to butcher one than the other," replied his father. "The taboo on horseflesh was simply a matter of sentiment. I should define sentiment as a spiritual luxury that contributes nothing to our material prosperity or to our survival as organisms struggling to exist in a competitive world. Whether or not a sentiment can be rationally defended depends, no doubt, on one's first principles or philosophical presuppositions. But the selection of first principles is, I suspect, heavily influenced by sentimental considerations far more often than philosophers would care to admit. Sentiment enters so intimately into the fabric of life and thought that the attempt to extirpate it would be fatal. Although I defined sentiment as a spiritual luxury that contributes nothing to our survival, I should add that, paradoxically, without it no people seems able
"If sentiment helps people to survive, this family should be long-lived," said Mrs. Fernley. "Nobody could accuse us of lacking sentiment, which expresses itself in the most varied ways, from carefully preserving games which the children have outgrown to pensioning off farm animals that become too old to work, instead of selling them as other farmers do, and preserving forest on land that might profitably be planted with crops. I'm certain that if we had less sentiment we would be richer, but I'm not sure that we would be happier."

"If you lost all your sentiment," Elvira remarked, "I wouldn't know you, because you would no longer be Fernleys but other people. That is, everyone except Harold would become somebody else. He's the hard-headed, practical member of the family."

"Yes, for my part," said Harold, "I wish this family had less sentiment and more push. Think of all the things we might have, if we worked this farm as it should be worked."

"I like it as it is, and I'm grateful that at this table I can eat what is set before me without asking what it contains," said Edwin, salting another tortilla. "That's one of the best parts about being home again. Living among strangers, I had constantly to be on guard not to eat food that would violate my principles or my sentiments, as you may wish to call them."

"I know it must often have been difficult for you, Edwin, as it was for me when I was at school with Elvira in the States," Violet sympathized. "But now your troubles are over, at least on that score."
"Tell us more about your canoe trip, Edwin," suggested Elvira. "It must have been great fun."

"I wished to see something of the far north, before coming home to the tropics. I thought it might be my last chance. It was not hard to persuade Eugene Rivers, my classmate, to accompany me. You may remember Gene; he came with me on my last visit home, three years ago. At the end of the summer course at the university, we went up to northern Ontario and bought a canoe, in which we spent three weeks following the waterways through the wilderness. There were a number of portages, and carrying a canoe over rough ground, sometimes for more than a mile, can be hard work. But it was worth the effort. After paddling all day through dark water, the rough fare that we prepared for ourselves over the campfire on the shore tasted good to us. We could not afford inflatable mattresses and other luxurious camping equipment; but after the first night or two, the ground lost its hardness. It was grand to sleep beside the lapping water, where we could watch the stars twinkle through the boughs of the spruce trees. Sometimes the stillness of the night was broken by the howling of distant wolves, the wailing of a moose, the wild cry of a loon, or the honking of migrating geese. Several times we surprised a moose feeding on water plants in the shallows; usually he bolted, but once a huge bull merely looked up to watch us glide by."

"How I wish I could have been with you!" exclaimed Harold.

"We were sorry that you weren't. We sometimes talked about
you and the others at Selva Alegre, as we sat about the campfire. The nights were already growing cold, and the few deciduous trees, birches, aspens and maples — were ablaze with yellows and reds. It was gratifying to be able to name all the trees we saw, and most of the other plants, except the grasses. It made us feel that we really knew some botany and had not wasted our time studying it. Here the huge variety of plants overwhelms me, making me feel like an ignoramus. It was the same with the birds; we saw fewer than we expected, but had little trouble identifying those we saw; whereas here, where there are many more kinds and we have no field guide, the birds are most confusing. Another thing that I liked about that north country was the rarity of snakes and other venomous creatures, except mosquitos. There you could sleep on the ground without fear that you would awake with a fer-de-lance or a bushmaster or a mano de piedra curled up beside you. I wish it were possible to camp here in our forests with as little danger from snakes as in Canada."

"It appears that those northern woods have cast over you the spell about which I have read — the spell that draws men back again and again. We must look about for some stronger spell to hold you here in Costa Rica, else we may lose you," said Mrs. Fernley, smiling sadly.

"Never fear, Mother! The tropics has the stronger spell, which has brought me back and will hold me. I love tropical profusion, even if it does humble a naturalist's intellectual pride by ob-
truding upon him, whichever way he turns, plants and animals he cannot name and knows nothing about. Doubtless such chastening is good for us. But tropical profusion challenges us to learn more, and provides a field not so crowded by investigators as every branch of nature in northern countries seems now to be. Gene feels the same way about the tropics. By the way, he would like to come here next year to study the habits of some of our birds for his dissertation in ornithology. He's working for a Ph.D., you know. He would need to stay four or five months at least, if there are no objections."

"We all liked Gene, and I see none," said Mr. Fernley, "but your mother must decide. She manages the household."

"Certainly, let him come!"

Smiling mischievously, Harold looked pointedly at Violet, until her eyes dropped and her cheeks reddened ever so slightly, or at least he fancied that they did. "Don't blush, Violet," he admonished. "We all know that you were fond of Eugene Rivers."

"Edwin's friends are my friends, or I hope they are ame. There was no more to it than that," she retorted.

Carmen, the barefooted girl who waited on the table, now removed the dishes and brought in a pie covered with beaten foam that rose well above its rim. Edwin smiled appreciatively. "One of your grand lemon pies, Mother! In all my travels, I never tasted lemon pies as good as yours. Yet Americans say that the English don't know how to make pies."

"After I married an American, I thought that I had better.
learn. I made the pie with the last lemon on the tree, which I saved for your homecoming. You will have to wait until next year for the mangoes that you love so much, but I could at least make you a lemon pie," said Mrs. Fernley, carefully dividing the circle into eight equal segments, including one for Carmen and a second helping that she intended to press upon the newcomer.

When they rose from the table, Edwin went to his room and removed some parcels from a suitcase. The family had meanwhile gathered on the veranda, where he handed a flat parcel to his mother, explaining apologetically:

"I wished to bring a separate gift for everybody; but after our canoe trip was over and we sold our canoe, I had little more than enough money for the trip home. So I bought one present for the whole family—some phonograph records which I hope that all will enjoy. There is a Beethoven symphony, and a new record of bird songs, one of the first of its kind. I thought that Father would like to hear again the songs that he knew as a boy. And here is a book for you, Elvira; I hope that you will like it. For Beto and his family, knowing how much they value religious pictures, I brought a colorful reproduction of the Nativity by Botticelli, the one showing the farm animals adoring the infant Jesus and the angels dancing above the cowshed. I suppose that I should have something for Carmen, but I never saw her before today."

"I will find a little gift for Carmen—a handkerchief or a bar of scented soap—and tell her it's from you," said Mrs. Fernley. "Your gifts were thoughtfully selected, and I am sure
we all appreciate them greatly. I am eager to hear the records, but I think that first you should have a siesta. You must be very tired after the aeroplane trip yesterday, then your early start this morning and the long ride in the crowded bus. Travel used to be so pleasant and restful in the good old days when we went by sea, and had a week or two with nothing to do but loaf, read, play games, eat good food, and enjoy the sunshine and sea breezes. Now we are whisked about so fast that we hardly have time to adjust ourselves to the changes, and I find it most wearing. This modern progress is not all gain, and I should be content with a little less of it. I can see that you are sleepy; so have a good rest, and afterward Violet and I will help you to unpack and arrange your things."

Edwin retired to his room and, after two nights with little sleep, was soon slumbering soundly, while rain fell in torrents outside.
Chapter 2
MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

At Bôiva Alegre everyone arose at daybreak, if not before, and nearly everyone went early to bed. But on Edwin's first night at home, talk of many things kept the Fernleys up well beyond their usual hour for retiring. After his long nap in the afternoon and all the day's excitements, Edwin could not sleep. The rain had continued after nightfall, swelling the Aguas Claras into a raging torrent that plunged down its boulder-strewn channel with a loud roar, punctuated by the grinding sounds of shifting rocks and the hollow thuds of floating logs striking against them.

Edwin had grown up with the river's varying tones so constantly in his ears that before leaving home he was only intermittently aware of them, as in the silence of the night, or when the wind blowing from the stream carried its notes more strongly to the house. But now, after so long an absence, he had lost his habituation to the river's voice, whose loudness, as of a passing express train, helped to keep him awake. Yet this was the very sound that had lulled him to sleep on many a rainy night of his lost boyhood, and it carried his thoughts back to days that could never return.

Edwin's earliest memories clustered around the farmhouse and the surrounding garden, bright with tropical blossoms. Brilliant birds flitted through the shrubbery and shade trees; and often a dainty hummingbird would dart up and hover, on wings beating invisibly fast, before a flower, into which it plunged its long...
sharp bill to sip the nectar. Over a dozen kinds of hummingbirds visited the garden, and some built their downy, lichen-encrusted nests amid its foliage. Flashes of magenta, emerald, blue, violet or golden light shot out from the tiny birds as they shifted their position from blossom to blossom, turning different parts of their metallic plumage toward the watching eye. From March to May or June, a many-voiced avian chorus vibrated through the garden at dawn, to be resumed, with less volume, after the afternoon clouds subdued the brilliant sunshine that silenced some of the songsters, especially the big brown thrushes. Such impressions, daily and yearly repeated, powerfully influenced the sensitive child. Even before he could name the birds or the flowers, or suspect what was happening to his developing mind, he was becoming adapted to an environment which would finally be as indispensable to his contented existence as its ancestral habitat is to any wild creature. Isolated from verdure and nature's gentler influences, as in the midst of a great bustling city, his spirit would droop and languish, like the foliage of some tender shade plant that has been thoughtlessly set in strong sunshine.

But at Selva Alegre, as everywhere else, nature did not always smile. Whole years might pass without a violent wind, yet at times it blew with destructive fury. One of Edwin's earliest definite recollections was of such a windstorm. Toward the end of a cloudy afternoon, the still air began suddenly to move, swaying the topmost boughs. Rapidly increasing in intensity, the wind was soon rushing with such speed that the stoutest trees bowed before it.
Above the swish of countless straining leaves rose the groans of rending wood and the crash of falling branches. All the grown-ups rushed to close doors and windows; then Edwin’s mother carried him into the darkened library and dropped into a chair, holding her terrified two-year-old child in her arms. Of a sudden, there was a deafening sound of splitting wood; the room became lighter; and his mother screamed. The wind had driven the end of a broken branch through the wall at a corner of the house. Mrs. Fernley carried Edwin into the bedroom, while her husband moved exposed furnishings and books to more protected places. After ten minutes of violence, the wind died away almost as suddenly as it had arisen. In the following days, there was great activity mending the gap in the house wall, cutting up and removing the broken branches and uprooted trees that littered the garden and plantation.

When Edwin was not quite two years old, Violet was born. At first her arrival, as though from nowhere, made little difference in his life beyond the transference of some of his mother’s attention from himself to the helpless newcomer, whose presence in her arms he vaguely resented. After she could toddle around and liape articulate words, she became his first playmate. One morning, when Edwin was about four, he was playing in the garden with his sister, when he noticed her peering intently into the shade beneath the arching fronds of a young palm. Approaching to see what held her attention, he descried a brownish object lying on the brown earth beside the thick trunk. As his young eyes rapidly adjusted to the dimmer light, he recognized the brownish thing as a coiled-
snake - a short, stout mano de piedra, with a bulbous head and an abruptly slender tail. Meanwhile his little sister, curious about the strange object and oblivious of her peril, had ventured within the deadly serpent's striking range. Pulling her away with all his young strength, the boy shouted for help. In a trice his mother arrived to whisk the children into the house, while a laborer came with a stick and killed the dangerous invader of the garden.

Praised for his bravery and presence of mind, Edwin was told that he had saved his sister from death. As they grew older, the two children were from time to time reminded of this episode, until Violet understood that she owed her life to her brother, no less than to her parents, while Edwin was made increasingly conscious of his role, thus unpremeditatedly assumed, as preserver and protector of his sister. In later boyhood, Edwin was inclined to belittle this exploit of his childhood, saying that he had been in no real danger, that he was too young to realize the risk he ran, that in similar circumstances anybody would have done the same. Only in maturer years did he suspect that his parents had deliberately magnified the episode, in order to strengthen the bond of attachment between brother and sister, desirable in any family, and doubly desirable in one far removed from all kinsmen, resident among people who differed greatly in customs and outlook. Whether in consequence of Edwin's pulling his baby sister out of harm's way and the parents' calculated elaboration of this event, or whether from natural sympathy and similarity of temperament, the two became
closer friends than you will often find a brother and sister to be.

When Edwin was four years old and Violet two, Harold arrived. After the little brother could walk, Edwin and Violet were made jointly responsible for his safety, and this shared duty also helped to draw the two older children together. One of the charges laid upon them was to keep watch for snakes while playing out of doors. Venomous serpents did not often appear in the garden, at least in the daytime; but there was always the dreadful possibility that a lurking snake might strike a child, whose small organism would quickly succumb to the corrosive venom. The mother's mind was more at ease when her little ones played on the veranda rather than on the ground, but their father insisted that it was unfair to keep them always confined to the house. He argued that wherever one dwells, life is not exempt from peril, and the risk that their children incurred from venomous animals was probably less, rather than greater, than the danger from motorcars to which children in the centers of population are exposed.

After the Fernley children could walk with ease, they were often taken to bathe in the river, where they would splash in the shallows with shouts of glee. Soon their father taught them to swim, in one of the few pools that were deep and broad enough to take a few strokes without knocking painfully against the boulders that littered this turbulent stream's bed. These swimming lessons were largely confined to the dry season, when the shrunken current flowed less strongly. After their swim, the children dried their lithe little bodies in the neighboring sunny pasture, in view of nobody but their parents and the grazing horses.
Then a picnic was spread on a flat rock, beneath the dense shade of a sotolacaballo tree, whose massive, gnarled branches upheld a profusion of orchids, aroids, bromeliads, ferns large and small, and other aerial vegetation. While parents and children ate beside the flowing water, big and little green kingfishers coursed up and down the channel, flying swiftly as though to keep an important engagement; a pair of dainty little torrent flycatchers flitted from rock to rock, snatching tiny insects from the air or braving the lapping surges to pluck minute creatures from the water's edge; and often, during the northern winter, a visiting spotted sandpiper, now with immaculate white breast, hunted over a narrow sandy beach, teetering along with deliberate steps. The water, fresh air, and hot sunshine made everyone drowsy; and after walking home in the warmest hour of the day, all were ready for a siesta.

In the evening, after the children had been tucked in bed, one, usually the father, of their parents, read or told them a story. Sometimes it was one of the immortal legends of ancient Greece, sometimes a fairy tale or a fable from Aesop or La Fontaine, sometimes a story of his native land and his early life there; but mostly he delighted to tell of the generous and kindly deeds that men are capable of performing, for their fellow men or for animals of many kinds. Stories of horror and bloodshed were rarely told to the children, and never at bedtime, as their parents wished them to fall asleep with only sweet, ennobling thoughts revolving in their minds. They believed—perhaps correctly—that the sentiments and emotions that color our minds as slumber overtakes them, especially in our formative
years, work in their unfathomed depths through the long hours of darkness, influencing our character more than most people suspect.

When Edwin was six, and had already accumulated much useful knowledge from his contacts with nature and the varied work of the farm no less than from his parents' stories, his formal education began. The nearest school was two miles away; and although it was perhaps as good a school as one should expect in so remote and thinly populated a district, it was not as well equipped and staffed as it might have been. And most of the pupils were too undernourished, too overtaxed with chores of home and farm, to advance in their studies as rapidly as Edwin was capable of doing. Accordingly, the Fernleys undertook to teach their children, following a course prepared by a North American school for just such isolated, English-speaking families. Their mother taught them reading, writing, and drawing, while their father became responsible for the lessons in mathematics, history, and scientific subjects. Edwin did well in all his studies except history, to which he seemed to have an insuperable aversion. One day his father remonstrated with him, asking why he could not remember the stories in his history books as well as those that he was told at bedtime. "Because," explained the boy, "in your stories people act sensibly and kindly, as they ought to; but in history people so often act stupidly and cruelly that I do not like to remember what they did." But, on the whole, Edwin learned his lessons so well that he could give much help to Violet, and was ready to teach certain subjects to Harold.
Sometimes the press of work in the house and farm caused the lessons to fall behind schedule. One morning, when Edwin had some problems in arithmetic of more than ordinary difficulty, his father, who was obliged to be absent most of the day, directed him to sit down to his work at eight o'clock in the morning and not to leave the house until it was finished. For perhaps half an hour, the boy concentrated resolutely on his figures and wrote down a number of correct answers. But each time that he looked out the window, seeing the sunshine lying so invitingly on the lawn where his little brother played, hearing the sounds of the birds and the ceaselessly clamoring river, he found it more difficult to keep his mind on his work. Presently there was some commotion among the trees, where a dozen scarlet-rumped black tanagers were chirping and complaining like so many excited house sparrows, while other birds joined in with more subdued notes. Suspecting that a snake was causing the avian uproar, Edwin dropped his pencil and ran out into the garden; but the only cause of excitement that he could discover was a big, bedraggled moth, with clear spaces like windows in its broad brown wings. The insect was clinging innocuously amid the dense foliage of an orange tree; and whenever it fluttered its wings, a fresh spasm of alarm spread through the watching birds.

After solving the mystery, Edwin loitered in the garden, instead of returning to his school work. Presently Amado, son of one of the farm laborers, came with lunch for his father, who was harvesting maize in a field at a good distance from the house. The barefoot boy, who was about Edwin's age, carried the lunch
in alforjas, twin pockets woven of coarse fibers and joined together like saddlebags, so that they could be hung over the shoulders.

"Come with me, Edwin," pleaded the boy, who was timid of the solitary path through the forest and tangled second-growth thickets.

"I'm sorry, but I must finish my lessons," replied Edwin.

"It won't take long. We'll soon be back, and then you can finish your lessons," persisted Amado.

"No, I can't."

"Maybe we will find some nice tender young pumpkins in the milpa. Your mother would like them."

"Well, yes, I'll go to keep you company. But we must hurry back, so I can finish my lessons."

The two lads, neither of whom had lived through ten rainy seasons, set off together, passing through a pasture and then entering a belt of heavy forest, where a variety of palms grew amid massive hardwood trees. A troupe of white-faced monkeys happened to be foraging in the treetops above the roadway, running from crown to crown along the swinging bush ropes that formed suspension bridges between them, or leaping boldly across a gap in the forest canopy. Seeing the boys, the white-faces began to bark and cough in disapproval of human intrusion into their ancestral domain. How could a small boy refrain from shouting back, just to keep the colloquy going? Some of the monkeys nervously bounced up and down, shaking the slender boughs on which they stood and dislodging dead twigs, or perhaps making ineffectual attempts to throw them. Then they would scamper off through the concealing
foliage, to peer down once again through a convenient opening in
the greenery. And while some carefree members of the band made
themselves conspicuous, a mother with a small replica of herself
clinging to her back scrambled up into the dense foliage of a
lofty tree and prudently vanished. What keen observer, witnessing
this display of mutual interest, could fail to suspect that men
and monkeys spring from a common ancestry?

When at last they reached the milpa and Amado gave the
alfobas to his father, the man, who as usual had gone forth at
sunrise to work with only a tortilla and a cup of sweetened coffee
to sustain him, carried them to a shady spot at the field's edge.
With a ravenous appetite, he attacked the paste of mashed beans
wrapped up in tortillas, washing down the food with liberal
draughts of sweetened water from a bottle that had counterbalanced
the tortillas in the saddlebags.

Meanwhile, Edwin and Amado searched for green pumpkins. The
pumpkin seeds had been planted along with the maize, after the
season's first rains came in March. Since the cornfield had not
been weeded since the young stalks were a foot high in May, it was
now, in mid-August, covered with a rank growth of weeds and vines
that came up to the boys' waists, above which rose the dry corn-
stalks, whose heavy ears were nodding downward as the stems decayed.
Through and over this dense herbage trailed the long pumpkin vines,
with their great yellow blossoms exposed to the sunshine. But the
developing pumpkins, borne downward by their own weight, were not
easy to find amid the tangled growth whose color matched their
own. As Edwin hunted through the weeds, he looked sharply for
snakes that might be lurking in the dark shadows; for his guilty conscience, no less than his bare legs, made him feel especially vulnerable. Not only had he disobeyed his father in coming, but he had come without the little leggins that his parents insisted that he wear for protection in the woods and thickets. If a snake struck him now, his troubled conscience hinted, they might not even try to save his life with antivenin, as, not long before, his father had saved a neighbor whom a fer-de-lance had bitten.

Edwin discovered the first pumpkin, a small one no larger than his head. Then Amado found, in rapid succession, a small one and a big one that was still soft enough to be easily indented with a fingernail. The boys agreed that Amado should have the two small pumpkins, which would fit into his alforjas, while Edwin took the one that was far too big for them. The long home-ward path was mostly uphill; the sun was hot; and Edwin, carrying the awkward burden in his two small arms, needed frequent rests. When he reached the house, lunch was being served.

"Look, Mother, what a big pumpkin I have brought you from the milpa!" he said as he gave it to her. "It is still tender enough to use as a vegetable. I thought you would like it."

"So that's where you went without telling anyone!" exclaimed Mrs. Fernley. "You had us all wondering what happened to you. Certainly, I'm always glad to have a green pumpkin to cook; but it's unkind of you to make us worry so. Now go and wash and sit down to your lunch. I know you are hungry."

Edwin had worked up a tremendous appetite, and by the time it was satisfied he was drowsy. He lay down for his siesta, telling
himself that he would get up soon and finish his arithmetic. But he slept longer than usual, and when at last he took up his pencil, he found that the work did not go as well as in the morning when he was fresh. Still, he was relieved when he completed the last multiplication before his father returned.

In the evening, Mr. Fernley asked Edwin for his work. The first part was well done, but toward the end there were many mistakes.

"Did you do all this in the morning before you left the house, as I told you?" asked Mr. Fernley.

"No, Father; I went down to the milpa with Amado to find a pumpkin, and in the afternoon I finished it. I didn't mean to leave, but Amado begged me to go with him to take his father's lunch. He didn't want to go alone."

Mr. Fernley looked grave. "What would you do if a son whom you loved disobeyed you flagrantly?" he asked.

Standing straight and fearless before his father, Edwin considered a moment, then said, "I should kiss him to show that I still loved him, then send him to bed without any supper."

Restraining an impulse to snatch the boy up in his arms and cover him with kisses, the father bent over, kissed him tenderly on the forehead, and waited. Without another word, Edwin marched off, undressed, brushed his teeth, and got into bed. He was hungry, but before long he fell asleep, resolving not to let himself be so easily led astray in the future. This self-prescribed punishment was the most severe of the two or three that he could remem-
ber having received.

Incident after incident flitted through Edwin’s mind as he lay sleepless, listening to the river’s roar; but only the more memorable of them detained his thoughts. The next highlight in his memories was his eleventh birthday. He awoke on this day to find his father standing beside his bed.

"Happy birthday, my boy," he said. Kissing him. "I cannot bring your present into the room, because it is too big, but you will find it behind the house."

Running out in his pajamas, Edwin found nothing new except an unfamiliar horse, saddled and bridled, tied to a tree. Expecting something in a package or a box, he looked around with growing disappointment, until he noticed a card attached to the reins. On it was written: "To Edwin, with birthday greetings from Mother, Father, Violet and Harold."

"Oh, you beautiful horse!" exclaimed the delighted boy, patting the animal’s velvety nose. Then he walked all around the horse, admiring him first from one angle and then from another. Like most of the local horses, this one was small, but very well proportioned, with a bright chestnut coat and a white star between his eyes.

"Is he really all mine?" Edwin asked his father, who had followed him into the dooryard.

"Yes, he is all yours, and you will find him as gentle as he is handsome. He is yours not only to ride and enjoy, but also to care for. You must see that he lacks nothing necessary, that he
has salt every week, that there are no ticks in his ears or under his tail. From time to time, he will need a bath. Since the horse will help to make your life pleasant, you must try to make his pleasant, too. To care for the welfare of a living thing is a great responsibility, but I believe that you are ready for it."

After much discussion at the breakfast table, Edwin called his horse "Callip," a name suggested by his father, who knew Greek. The boy could already manage horses. After breakfast, he saddled Callip and rode down the valley, his spirit exalted by a novel admixture of feelings that included delight in his new possession, pride in his growing strength and competence, and an intensified consciousness of himself, especially when he passed anyone on the road. At Santa Teresa, he showed his birthday present to Elvira and her parents, who praised it warmly. Elvira took a short ride on Callip. Then she trotted home, well pleased with his excursion.

For days, Edwin could hardly take his eyes off Callip. Every evening he gave the horse bananas, some brown sugar, or a little corn, to vary his monotonous diet of grass; and on Sundays he had salt. Before long, Edwin discovered that a loved possession is no undiluted joy. What if Callip should fall sick and die, as happened recently to a neighbor's horse? From this agonizing dread, he sought relief by asking his father whether horses often die young. Instead of taking the easy way and assuring his son that Callip was not likely to die for many years, Mr. Fernley pointed out that, in this world of uncertainty, we must reconcile ourselves to the possibility of losing at any time, and often when we least
For days, Edwin could hardly take his eyes off Gallip. Every evening he gave the horse bananas, some brown sugar, or a little corn, to vary his monotonous diet of grass; and on Wednesdays and Sundays he had salt. The more the lad gazed at his horse, delighting his eyes with the graceful curves of neck and back; the more he felt the glossy sleekness of the chestnut coat; the more he felt Gallip’s soft lips nuzzling his palm when he took his salt or corn, the more Edwin loved him. There is no love more pure and intense than that of an affectionate child for the things he cherishes; there is no protecting spirit more fervid and devoted. He imagines himself capable of the highest sacrifice to save what he adores. What treasures of love and devotion an earnest child lavishes on an animal or even a lifeless doll that is incapable of responding! Sometimes, when Edwin stood gazing admiringly at Gallip, some invisible aura, some strong but intangible bond, seemed to reach forth from the loving breast and draw the horse closer to him.

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expect it, the things that we most dearly cherish. In this sad event, our greatest consolation will be that we had always been kind to the person or animal that we have lost.

Edwin was himself responsible for his first great scare with Gallip. One day, when there was much hauling to be done, he was asked to lend his horse to carry a load. The afternoon happened to be fine, as was rare at this season; and after Gallip's return, Edwin was eager for the daily ride of which he had been deprived. So he saddled the horse for the second time and rode far up the valley, delighting in the afternoon sunshine. When at last Gallip was turned into the pasture, the over-tired horse hung his head and would not graze.

"How inconsiderate you have been, Edwin!" admonished his mother. "Gallip should have had a good rest, for he is not used to carrying heavy sacks; but you cruelly made him work again."

"My son," said Mr. Fernley, "one of the Spanish Jews of ancient India recommends that we learn to live in the flesh of others, feeling their pains and pleasures as though they were our own. That is one of the most important lessons for all of us to learn, and I believed that you were learning it. But today you have been most thoughtless, and I am ashamed of you."

"It won't happen again. But what shall I do for Gallip? Is he going to die?" asked the lad, trying to blink the tears from his eyes.

"Give him some brown sugar, and he will be all right soon."

Edwin dissolved some brown sugar in water, placed it in a calabash, and offered it to his horse, who licked it eagerly.
Before long he was grazing.

Another memorable day in Edwin's life was that on which he was first permitted to ride alone to the village of San Iridio, to take and bring the mail and buy some supplies for the house. When he had attended to all his little commissions and started home with full saddlebags, the sky, which had been clear at dawn, was rapidly clouding over. Before long, drops began to fall. Reaching back for the big rubber raincoat that was tied behind his saddle, Edwin put it on and carefully covered the saddle bags with its ample skirts. Soon he was riding along in a drenching rain, which formed little rivulets in the stony roadway. After several miles, he came to a broad, shallow stream, which Callip had easily forded in the morning. Now the sight of the raging torrent of brown water that blocked his homeward way made Edwin's heart sink. It looked dangerous to cross; yet if he waited for the flood to subside, night might overtake him, and his parents would worry. As he sat in the saddle, watching trunks and branches riding toward the distant sea on the turbid flood, an old farmer on a white horse pulled up beside him.

"Better wait, friend," he counselled. "If your horse stumbles and you fall off, you will be carried away and drowned, as has happened to more than one man at this ford. If I know this creek, it will subside before evening."

As the afternoon wore slowly on, other horsemen and a few pedestrians were halted by the flood, until there was a knot of waiting travellers on either side. Some, lacking raincoats or umbrellas, were thoroughly drenched. Occasionally one shouted
something to an acquaintance on the other shore, trying to make himself heard above the stream's clamor. Presently a horseman trotted up and, without pausing, pushed past the others and spurred his horse right into the rushing water, which rose above his saddle girth. As the horse floundered over the stony bottom, the rider swayed alarmingly from side to side, and the watchers on the banks expected to see him fall into the angry water. But at last he emerged on the opposite shore, where he shouted and waved his hat in triumph, as he spurred his steed down the road.

"That drunken fool Pancho Gómez will tempt the Almighty once too often," muttered the old farmer on the white horse.

After a while, the downpour dwindled to a light shower, then to a drizzle. An eternity seemed to pass before Edwin noticed that the flood waters were receding from the roadway. Soon some of the more daring riders were urging their horses across the ford. Edwin wished to follow their example, but the old farmer held him back. When the descending sun shot long, horizontal beams through a gap in the leaden mass of the western clouds, the farmer said that they could safely cross. Not far beyond the ford, Edwin met his father, who had come on a horse to look for him. It was nearly dark when they reached home, to the immense relief of Edwin's anxious mother.

"I would have gone right across, like that other man," remarked Harold, after Edwin had related the day's adventures at the supper table.

"Edwin was quite right to follow the advice of an experienced
old-timer like Don Ramón, whom I must thank for his friendly interest," said Mr. Fernley. "There are times when a brave man will risk, or even deliberately lose, his life for the safety of those he loves or a cause that is worth the sacrifice, although such occasions are rare in a well-governed country. But to endanger life or limb without sufficient reason is not bravery; it is the mark of a fool, often of a vaunting, vainglorious fool. Life is precious, and each of us owes it to himself, no less than those who love him and perhaps have toiled and made sacrifices for him, to take no needless risks."

Edwin never forgot this day's lesson.

It must have been a year or two after this that Henry Hayward first visited Selva Alegre. Dr. Hayward was a botanist engaged in gathering material for a much-needed monograph on the palms of Central America. To advance this great undertaking, it was necessary to explore the forests in remote regions where living quarters are difficult to find. Naturalists in his predicament are sometimes a sore trial to householders in the back country, for, often with no better claim than a letter of introduction from some one slightly acquainted with their prospective host, they request admission to a home whose accommodations may be quite limited; by hinting at the great scientific value of their studies, they make it almost impossible for anyone with pretensions to culture to turn them away. When, after the exchange of a few letters, Dr. Hayward arrived at Selva Alegre, a stranger with a cartload of collecting and
photographic apparatus, he was greeted with more courtesy than enthusiasm. A fortnight later, when he left with his baggage almost doubled in volume by the bulky specimens of palm trees that he collected, he went as a friend invited to return, one who would keep in touch with the Fernleys through the years. The wiry little man had won their admiration by his indefatigable dedication to his strenuous task of exploring the mountain forests for palms, their willing help by his unfeigned gratitude for all that they did for him, their affection by the charming simplicity of his manners. Although the Fernleys had long been interested in the exuberant vegetable and animal life that surrounded them, lacking training and guidance, they had acquired only a superficial knowledge of it. An excellent all-round naturalist, Dr. Hayward called their attention to fascinating things which lay before them unperceived. To the impressionable mind of young Edwin, who accompanied Dr. Hayward on some of his trips into the forest and helped him to gather his specimens, a new world was opened. A new interest was implanted there, to grow through the years. Aside from his parents, no one so influenced the future course of the boy's life as this wandering naturalist.
Chapter 3

ASPIRATIONS

Still Edwin could not sleep, and while he lay listening to the clamor of the river, subsiding now that the flood had passed its peak, his train of memories passed on to his student days in a distant land. As he approached his sixteenth birthday, Edwin faced the first great turning-point in his life. After much discussion between his parents and himself, it was settled that he would go to college in the States; and as preparation for admission to one of the better universities, a year or two in a secondary school seemed advisable. His studies in the North would place considerable strain on his father's limited financial resources; and to ease the burden, Aunt Florence, William Fernley's older sister, kindly offered to provide a home for her nephew while he attended school and college.

Since Edwin's birth, no member of the Fernley family had been separated from the others for more than a few weeks at a stretch, and the date of his departure hung over the household like a menacing thundercloud. His last day at home was spent making the rounds of beloved familiar scenes, putting in order all the things that he would leave behind, bidding farewell to Elvira and her family, giving parting caresses to the farm
animals. His father accompanied him on the long journey, by horse, by air, and then by rail, across the country to the Caribbean port where he would embark. After Edwin's baggage had been placed in his cabin, which he would share with another boy going north to study, father and son leaned side by side over the rail on the upper deck, while endless-belt conveyors lowered the last bunches of green bananas into the ship's hold. Before them, misty in the moonlight, rose the jumble of wild forested mountains beyond which, on the Pacific slope, their home lay.

"Remember, my boy," the father said as the hour of departure drew nigh, "that although we may seem far away, our thoughts, our love, and our hopes will always be with you. I trust that you will never forget those fine lines of Tennyson - Athena's promise to young Paris - that I have repeated to you more than once:

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,

These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

The best of us are deficient in self-knowledge, for the profoundest scientists and philosophers cannot tell us what we really are. But we know enough about ourselves to reverence our bodies for their marvellous organization, the product of many millions of years of slow evolution, and our minds for their boundless potentialities. Self-control, as Aristotle recognized long ago, is largely a matter of acquiring good habits in our formative years, and you have already made an excellent beginning. You will return to us bigger, stronger, more learned, and more experienced than you leave us; but it is my fondest hope that you will also bring back the same generous, pure and loving heart that you are taking
with you."

"I will try very hard, Father," promised the lad.

Then, as the gong warned visitors to go ashore, Mr. Fernley embraced his son, turned abruptly, and marched down the gangway. The moorings were cast off, the propeller began to turn, and without a tug the steamship receded from the pier. Edwin watched the palm-lined shore grow dim in the distance, then retired to his cabin.

At school, Edwin’s teachers found him on the whole more mature, more serious, and better informed than the majority of his classmates. He had read more of the classics, he wrote well, he had in Spanish a second language in which he was almost as fluent as in English, and his life on the farm had given him a first-hand acquaintance with practical matters that most of the other boys lacked. He knew a great deal about tropical plants and animals, and was eager to become familiar with those of the temperate zone, which he knew only by name. What he chiefly needed in order to enter college was American history, work in laboratory science and, above all, familiarity with classroom procedures. His foreign background, and his ability to speak with authority about things of which his classmates knew nothing, enhanced Edwin in their estimation. But his unfamiliar turns of speech, the result of being bilingual from earliest childhood, often amused the other boys, who sometimes mischievously imitated or even mocked him. His fleshless diet, too, was strange to them. Doubtless, had his been a happy-go-lucky, gregarious temperament, these peculiarities would hardly have set him apart from his schoolmates; but added
to his contemplative, retiring disposition, they prevented his becoming one of the crowd. With a single exception, Edwin made no close friends during his two years in school.

With his Aunt Florence and Uncle Norman, Edwin was far from happy. For all its luxurious appointments and gadgets, such as he never knew at home, the apartment on the tenth floor of a huge building seemed a dreary prison to a boy who all his life had dwelt close to the earth and the living things that it supports. Neither the radio, nor occasional visits to the theatre and the movies, compensated for the absence of his horse, the farm with all its absorbing occupations, the sonorous river, and, above all, his parents. Uncle Norman, a prosperous stockbroker, was cordial but uncomprehending. Aunt Florence, whose only child, a daughter, was away at college, could not help taking a motherly interest in the gray-eyed, serious boy, who partly filled the place of the son she had yearned for but never borne. Edwin was both grateful to and fond of his pretty, vivacious aunt. But she did not understand him, and she heartily disapproved of the way he had been raised. One day she said to him:

"William, my brother and your father, was always an impractical dreamer; and I fear he is bringing up his children to be the same."

"How can you say that, Aunt Florence?" asked Edwin, rallying to his parent's defence. "My father went into the wilderness where there was only forest and made a house and a farm that provides almost all our food and an excess to sell, too. And we children are learning how to manage all the crops, to take care of horses and cows, and to use carpenter's and blacksmith's tools. If that
isn't practical, I don't know what is."

"Your father had an inheritance to help him get started and support his family. From what I understand, the money that is paying for your education did not come from the farm, which merely gives you an inexpensive living that is doubtless very satisfying to all of you. But to get ahead in this competitive world, the ability to saw and hammer, to plant corn and beans or saddle horses, does not take one very far. Your Uncle Norman does not know which end of a nail goes into the wood, but he is a very successful business man. You must learn to wear the right clothes, to dance, to play a good hand of bridge, to mix cocktails—in short, you must become intimate with the right people, who are good business contacts. You should begin now, by entering as fully as possible into the social life of your schoolmates."

But the social life of his contemporaries, with its premature indulgence in adult activities such as smoking, drinking, and flirtatious affairs, repelled rather than attracted Edwin. His life on the farm, where from an early age he had chores to do, where he associated with adults more than with other children, had developed in him a sense of responsibility, seriousness, and practical competence, beyond all his classmates; yet at the same time he was at heart still an unspoiled boy, far less sophisticated than they. The time left free by his school work and the required exercises in the gymnasium and on the playing field, he devoted largely to reading, chiefly poetry, books of travel, and stories about animals—which last he perused with more relish than dis-
crimination, for he had not yet learned to separate sound
scientific observations from uncritical anecdotes and even the
fantasies of the "nature fakers."

What most annoyed Aunt Florence was her nephew's vegetarian
diet, which she blamed for his estrangement from his contempo-
raries. Since that he should have a fleshless diet was a condition
of his coming to live with her, she could not press Edwin to
partake of the meat course. But finally, when she could restrain
herself no longer, she sat down to write a long letter to her
brother William, expostulating with him for "imposing his own
peculiar standards upon his defenceless children, to the detriment
of their social prospects and even their health."

This impetuous missive was dispatched by air-mail, and
within ten days the reply came by the same rapid conveyance.
The brother dismissed the allegation that his children's health
had suffered from their diet, and asked Florence to compare her
nephew's strength and endurance with that of his schoolmates of
the same age. He took more seriously the charge that he was
dogmatically imposing his own peculiar ideals upon his children.
He wrote: "Responsible fathers who love their children wish to
transmit to them their most precious possessions, which they
usually consider to be their real estate and other worldly goods.
My own most precious possessions I take to be my spiritual goods,
including my ideals and principles of conduct; hence, following
the generally accepted practice, I wish to transmit these to
my descendants. But I do not force my ideals on my children, so
much as help them to realize that these ideals spring from our
immost nature, and that only conduct which conforms to these
ideals will ultimately satisfy them. However, Edwin has now
reached the age when he can decide such matters for himself.
If he wishes to join you and Norman in the fleshpots, I shall
be sorry, but I shall not rebuke him. I appreciate your concern
for your nephew’s prospects. — Your affectionate brother, William.”

Edwin was shown this letter, but he did not change his diet.
At times he was intensely homesick. He could not, as children of
wealthy parents in his situation were already beginning to do,
fly to Central America to pass the Christmas and the spring
holidays with his family. He would go home only for the long
summer vacation; and in December, June seemed infinitely remote.
At times he felt so desperately the need to see familiar places
and faces that, had it not been utterly impracticable, he might
have imitated the famous philosopher Herbert Spencer, who ran
away from the uncle to whom he had been sent for tutelage, and
made his way across England by a journey that seemed beyond the
power of a boy of thirteen.

When, at the age of seventeen, Edwin entered college, he was
happier than he had been at school. He was older now, and more
reconciled to prolonged absence from his beloved home. With a
wider choice of youths among whom to choose his friends, he made
some close ones, who invited him to their homes in the holidays.
One of his chief difficulties was the diversity of his developing
interests, which caused him to crowd his schedule with as many
courses as he could squeeze in, and made it hard to choose the subject in which he would specialize. At first, he was almost equally attracted by humanistic and scientific studies. When, in his junior year, the balance had definitely tipped to the side of the sciences, he was torn between the precision of physics, with its mathematical abstractions, and the greater variety, color, and intimacy with living nature offered by the biological sciences. Finally, his interest in the rich tropical flora amid which he had grown up, and the influence of his friend Dr. Hayward, led him to elect botany as his major subject. When the shortage of transportation during the second World War made it difficult for him to return home for his long vacations, he stayed for summer courses. Although his marks were not as high as they might have been if he had taken fewer subjects, they were creditable; and at the end of four years he received his baccalaureate degree with honor. Then he decided to continue his studies in the graduate school, where he had already spent two years.

As Edwin's thoughts ran over the years that had seemed so long while they were passing yet which now appeared so short in retrospect, his generous, loving heart overflowed with gratitude to the parents who had given him life and a happy childhood, to the teachers who had trained his mind and furnished it with precious knowledge. He felt that he owed a debt which he was eager to repay. How could he more fittingly show his gratitude to the thinkers and investigators who had gathered
this knowledge and the teachers who had transmitted it to him, than by adding his mite to the sum of human knowledge? To his parents his debt seemed even greater than to his teachers, for not only had they given him life and long years of devoted care, but they had likewise taught him much. He recalled that once, when discussing with his father Aristotle’s dictum that a child could never adequately recompense his parents, his father had agreed that the philosopher was right, but he had failed to suggest a solution of the predicament in which he left the debt-burdened child. Since we cannot repay our parents for the boon of life, to attempt to do so is foolish. To them we may return love and devotion for the loving care they have lavished upon us; but since the debt itself is unpayable, it can only be passed on. We relieve ourselves of the debt we owe for life and a happy childhood by giving life and a happy childhood to our progeny, who in turn can discharge their indebtedness by doing the same for their children. Like an entailed estate, the debt that we owe for the privilege of living in a beautiful world is transmitted from generation to generation and can never be liquidated.

Edwin hoped that before many years had passed he would have children, not only because he was conscientious about the discharge of his obligations and believed that fatherhood was essential to a full and balanced life, but because he was fond of them. For some time his thoughts had turned increasingly to matrimony, especially during a period of half a year when his aunt and uncle had sublet their apartment and gone abroad and
he was obliged to lodge in a widow's house near the campus. Whenever he was invited to dine with his young married friends, he could hardly avoid comparing their apparent nuptial bliss with his own solitude and becoming discontented with the latter. The warmth and cheer which a woman's presence could impart even to a couple of cheaply furnished rented rooms appealed strongly to his home-loving heart. His solitary lodging would seem bleak and cheerless when he returned to it after an evening of animated conversation in the home of another graduate student who had married early.

Although he had never quite fallen in love, Edwin had been interested in several young women. For some months he had assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of Sylvia, a graduate student in the department of modern languages, who attracted him by her intelligence and vivacity, which in her moments of animation made her rather plain face seem beautiful to him. His proficiency in a language which she was studying, and her interest in foreign countries, were points of contact between them. But she had disgusted him by covertly inviting caresses such as, he inferred from certain remarks that she had indiscreetly dropped, she had been in the habit of receiving from other young men. Such intimacies, he believed, should follow rather than precede marriage. He wished to ascertain whether they had enough shared interests and were spiritually attuned to each other, before even sealing their understanding with a kiss. The thought of manton behavior in the woman who would be the mistress of his home and the mother of his children repell-
ed him, and he soon drifted away from her.

From Sylvia he had turned to Bernice, a young woman of statuesque presence who worked in the plant physiology laboratory adjoining his own and was accounted an able student. On botanical field trips, he admired her stamina and ability to keep the pace set by a professor who, at sixty, prided himself on his capacity to walk through woods and fields as fast and as far as the most active of his students. She was somewhat too masculine for his taste, but he was ready to overlook this defect in consideration of her other good qualities. When they spent an evening together, her conduct never exceeded the bounds of propriety. But when he spoke warmly of the efforts which at Selva Alegre they made to live at peace with all creatures and harm none, she was unsympathetic. She soon made it clear that she would never relinquish any of her customary indulgences to achieve a closer harmony with the varied life around her; and without such an alteration in her manner of living, Edwin was sure that she could never make the kind of home for which he yearned. How strongly they differed in temperament was also revealed to him one evening when he took her downtown to see a moving picture that had been widely acclaimed. It was at one of those pretentious cinema theatres where the showing of the picture is preceded by a variety show, which on this particular evening included an act in which dwarfs of both sexes paraded on the stage in formal evening attire. Every fiber of Edwin's being revolted at this shameless display of deformity;
he could not keep his eyes on the stage, and when he turned to his companion, he was amazed to find her viewing with relish the spectacle which made his flesh creep. After a brief interval in which their special feeling for each other had made them self-conscious in the presence of their fellow-students, Edwin and Bernice relapsed into the easy intimacy of workers in the same department.

After these failures to find a congenial partner among the young women with whom he came in contact at the university, Edwin's thoughts had reverted more and more to the distant playmate of his boyhood. He could not remember a time when he had not been fond of Elvira, but she had always seemed to him like another sister rather than a potential wife. On his last visit home, however, he had not been insensitive to her charm; she already gave promise of becoming an exceptionally beautiful woman, and if not so highly educated as those with whom he had latterly been associated, she was as intelligent as any of them and her mind was by no means uncultivated. Moreover, having from childhood been familiar with the peculiar customs of the household at Selva Alegre, she understood their motives and sympathized with them. She was not likely to rebuff his aspiration for a closer harmony with every form of life as coldly as Bernice had done. Although these special considerations were not part of the Catholic faith in which Elvira had been raised, at least they seemed not incompatible with this religion. And even at the age of seventeen, it had been evident that Elvira
could think for herself and would not blindly accept any set of dogmas. The more that Edwin's thoughts dwelt upon Elvira, the more she seemed the ideal companion for him, the more the spark of love, which perhaps unperceived by him had fallen into his heart when he was last with her, leapt up into flame. The desultory correspondence which throughout his years of absence he had kept up with her now became more frequent and assumed a warmer tone.

Although to see more of Elvira was doubtless the strongest motive behind Edwin's decision to spend a year at home before finishing his work for his doctor's degree in botany, it was not one that he could well avow. Another strong incentive for taking this course was to be again with his family in the beloved home of his boyhood. But to his professor and his fellow students he explained, truthfully enough, that he was returning to his home in the tropics because there he would have abundant material for the research that he must complete for his doctoral dissertation, and he hoped to accomplish there in one year the work which at the university might require two. His professor approved his decision and helped him to plan his investigations.

Now here he was, where he had longed to be, lying in the very bed in which he had slept through most of the years of his boyhood. When he thought of all the things that he hoped to accomplish in twelve months, the interval seemed very short. It is a curious paradox that when we are in our early twenties and have nearly the whole of life ahead of us, we often feel the urgency of the passing hours far more keenly than in later
life, when we can expect far less time for the accomplishment of projects that may still be vast. Edwin's mind was so excited by the prospect of advancing his cause with Elvira—how enchanting she had become!—at the same time that he completed his research, and becoming in less than two years both a doctor of philosophy and the head of a family, that, late as it was, he still lay awake. But finally, past midnight, drowsiness calmed his teeming thoughts, and he slept soundly until the household began to stir at daybreak.
Chapter 4
FATHER AND SON

After opening his eyes just long enough to see the gray light of dawn seeping into his room through the flowered curtains at the window, Edwin closed them again and lay stretched at full length between his mother's immaculate white sheets, with the comfortable feeling of being just where he belonged. The swollen river had subsided during the night, but it still sent up a deep murmur that Edwin loved, because it was a constant reminder of the still unsullied wildness of the high mountains whence it flowed. In the garden, a rufous-tailed hummingbird was methodically repeating his little tee-we tee-we, as he did at dawn throughout the year, except at the height of the dry season. A tyranniscus, one of the tiniest of the flycatchers, voiced a weak dying quaver that seemed the complaint of an utterly broken heart. In a thicket at a greater distance, an orange-billed nightingale-thrush repeated a quaint verse that was more like talking than singing. But most of the birds had long since finished nesting, and save for a single burst of joyous song from the house wren, after he flew out from the niche beneath a roof tile where he slept, there was no melody to greet the new day.

After listening to the morning sounds for a few delicious minutes, the young man arose, shaved, dressed, and joined the others at the breakfast table, just as the sun floated up over the wooded crests of the eastern mountains into the clearest of rain-washed skies. Little was said at the meal, as everyone seemed
to have exhausted his conversation on the preceding evening. As they arose from the table, Mr. Fernley asked his eldest son if he were sufficiently rested for a walk through the farm. Edwin assured his father that he was feeling quite fresh, and there was nothing that he would like better to do.

As they were leaving the house five minutes later, Mr. Fernley, who had strapped a machete around his waist and put on stout leggings, noticed that his son’s legs were unprotected. "Aren’t you wearing your puttees, Edwin?" he asked.

"I lost the habit while I was in the North, where poisonous snakes are rare."

"Well, it is a good habit here in the tropics, where unfortunately they are far from rare. If our neighbor Juan Rodriguez had been wearing something over his legs when a mano de piedra struck him last year, he would have been spared days of pain and considerable expense. Especially people like ourselves, who become absorbed in observing the animals or plants in the forest, ought to protect themselves as much as possible against the chance of a bite from an unnoticed snake."

"But I don’t wish to hold you up, Father. I don’t know just where my old puttees are."

"We’re in no hurry, and I’m sure your mother has been keeping them for you and can lay her hands on them promptly."

Edwin returned to the house, and after a few minutes rejoined his father on the lawn, with his lower legs encased in stout puttees.

"Now I feel safer," remarked Mr. Fernley, as they started off
together.

As they walked through the shady riverside pasture, a long-tailed motmot darted across their path, like a flash of green and blue. Passing through a gate and crossing a narrow tributary stream on a footbridge, they entered the coffee plantation. The glossy foliage of the coffee bushes reflected the morning sunshine in a myriad little spears of light. With a cheerful "Buenos días, señores," they were greeted by Amado and his sister Marina, whose busy fingers were picking the bright red berries from amid the deep green leaves and dropping them into the broad basket which each had tied to his waist.

"How much are you paying the pickers this year?" Edwin asked his father.

"A colon and twenty centimes per cajuela, which is a little more than they receive on most of the farms heretofore." "I suppose that, if they are very diligent, they might pick three cajuellas before the afternoon rain drives them in," said Edwin. "That's the equivalent of a little more than half a dollar for a morning's work. The coffee, after being processed and exported, is drunk by people who earn ten times as much, and often far more, in the same interval. That is what we must pay for their labor when we buy the goods that they export to us in return for our coffee. It does not seem quite fair."

"But their effort is multiplied by efficient machinery. Coffee requires an immense amount of hand labor, and I doubt if the work of a coffee plantation can ever be mechanized, as is
being done with so many field crops in the North. Nevertheless, it's the most profitable thing we can grow here right now. This year we have planted five more acres in coffee, and next year we should plant another five acres. I think that will be our limit for some time to come; it will be hard enough to find pickers to take care of what we shall then have."

"But why so much coffee, Father? In the past you weren't so enthusiastic about the crop."

"It's a case of necessity. The cost of living is steadily mounting here in the backwoods, as everywhere else. Hazel and I are growing older. Now that we have a highway to the outside world, I think we should have a car, or at least a jeep, to take her back and forth, instead of riding horseback, often beneath a downpour. And if Harold finally decides to go abroad for study, that will also take much money. I know that all over the tropics, in Africa and the East Indies no less than in America, this post-war rise in prices is stimulating coffee planting, and the market will before long be glutted. But perhaps those of us who can bring our new plantings into bearing promptly will realize something before the prices fall."

"I hope it will not be necessary to sacrifice more of the forest for planting," remarked Edwin.

"I knew you would be troubled about that, you love the forest so. This year we planted only in the second-growth, on land where we used to sow annual crops. You must help me to choose the other five acres. From now on, I hope that we can put our heads together
and see how much we can make this farm produce, without ruining the things that make it attractive to us."

"That is what I wish to do," replied Edwin. "When Harold and I were small, we used to talk about how we would help you on the farm when we were grown."

"Come, let's look at the new coffee, which we finished setting out only last month; then we can go into the forest, as I know you are impatient to do."

They continued to walk through the old plantation, where the coffee bushes, laden with ripe and green berries, stood beneath spreading inga trees that shaded them lightly. Suddenly they emerged into a sun-flooded field, stretching up the slope to the edge of the primeval forest. Here the young coffee bushes, hardly knee-high, had been set in quincunxial formation, so that, whichever way one looked, they stood in long, straight lines. Between the ranks of coffee bushes, rows of recently planted bananas and plantains were spreading their first broad leaves to give the bushes shade.

"They look very good," remarked Edwin approvingly. "Hardly a bush is out of line. Who staked the field for such a perfect quincunx?"

"I did, with Beto's help. That work tires one's back."

As the father and son approached the forest's edge, they stopped to watch a tall shrub laden with clustered black berries, on which many birds were feeding. There were large velvety black tanagers with intensely scarlet rumps; smaller tanagers clad in green and blue with chestnut heads, and others that were yellow
with silvery throats; blue honeycreepers with azure crowns, red legs, and long black bills; stout little manakins with orange collars and black caps, that sometimes plucked the berries in flight; large flycatchers with bright yellow breasts, and smaller ones dressed in sober gray, with high, loose crests. For a long while, the two men stood watching, delighting in this display of life and color.

Presently the elder man remarked thoughtfully: "Here are a dozen kinds of birds feeding together in amity, without harming each other or the shrub that provides their food; on the contrary, they serve it by scattering its seeds far and wide. How beautiful and animated they are! How happy they all seem to be! They show us what the world would be like if Isaiah's Messiah arrived to pacify all creatures, or if animals had never begun to prey on each other, bringing fear, hatred, rage, and a host of other ugly passions into the world, converting beautiful living forms into hideous mangled carcasses."

"I abhor predation as you do, Father. But the ecologists insist that without it animals would multiply until they destroyed the vegetation that supports them, so that they would die horribly of starvation, instead of being more swiftly struck down by predators."

"I am not a biologist," said Mr. Fernley, "but I believe that nature, in her infinite resourcefulness, would have evolved other means of keeping animal populations within their means of subsistence, if predation had never arisen. Here in the tropics, for example, I rarely see more than two or three eggs in a bird's nest,
although as a boy in the North I often found twice as many.

Why should that be, unless it is because the birds here, having
to confront neither the scarcity of a snowy winter nor the perils
of a long migratory journey, live longer than those in the North,
and accordingly need not rear so many offspring to maintain their
population? Instead of producing a great excess of young to feed
predators or die of starvation, they have adjusted their rate of
reproduction to their average annual mortality. This, I suppose,
would be generally true in the animal kingdom, if predation
had never arisen. The predators are themselves responsible for
the excess population which they destroy, for they have forced
the species that they prey upon to reproduce more rapidly in order
to avoid extinction. Of course, if the predatory animals are sud-
denly removed, their victims may increase to the point where they
die of starvation; for adjustments in the rate of natural repro-
duction must require many generations of slow evolutionary change.
But it seems wrong to suppose that without predatory animals
nature could never achieve a stable balance. What is your opinion?"

"Your reasoning seems sound to me," said Edwin, marvelling
at the breadth of his father's interests and the penetration of
his intellect.

Suddenly the stillness of the morning was shattered by
raucous cries. Looking upward, the two men beheld a flock of
scarlet macaws flying westward over the valley, their gaudy
plumage aglow in the morning sunshine, their long tails streaming
behind their vivid bodies like slender pennants. Several dozen
of the large birds passed overhead, all in pairs which flew
wing to wing, with the exception of a lone individual who caused trouble by trying to join the couples. Flying with steady, measured strokes, they passed above the forest and vanished.

Through a gap in the massed bushes and vines at the forest's edge, a narrow pathway led into its shady depths. The transition from the intense sunshine of the clearing to the dim light of the primeval forest was so abrupt that it took the two men, especially the elder, a few moments to adjust their eyes to the changed illumination. As, after a long absence, Edwin let his gaze slide up the long, straight trunks of the trees to their lofty crowns, a feeling akin to reverence came over him. Beneath the larger trees, many palms lifted their rosettes of feathery fronds on tall, slender, gray columns, straight and symmetrical painstakingly as though they had been turned on a giant's lathe. From the distance, the full, mellow call of a great tinamou rang out, with the effect of sounding a few notes on an organ in a vast and silent cathedral.

"He welcomes you back," said Mr. Fernley softly.

"How good it is to be back!"

As they proceeded farther into the forest, a small brown bird rose from the pathway before them, where it had been busily flicking aside leaves with its short black bill. Alighting again a little way farther on, it resumed its industrious leaf-tossing. It did this thrice, before it vanished amid the undergrowth.

A sunbeam that strayed through the high forest canopy lighted up a spider's web stretched across the pathway. In his mood of
reverent appreciation, Edwin hesitated to disturb the smallest part of the forest life.

"Should we go around it, Father?" he asked, pointing to the web.

"You decide, Edwin."

"If we walk straight ahead, the spider will lose her work and her meal. But if we make a detour to avoid breaking the web, some poor insect will fly into it and be eaten. Here's a moral dilemma that I have not seen discussed in any book."

"You were always a thoughtful lad, Edwin. What solution do you propose?"

The young man stood regarding the cobweb, whose delicate strands shone with nacreous tints in the narrow sunbeam. At last he said:

"I cannot decide the problem on the principles of Utilitarian ethics, for I can measure the pleasures of neither spiders nor the insects on which they prey. So I must follow my moral intuition, and my sympathy is always with the victims."

He took a step forward; the delicate web vanished.

"You acted just as I should have done," said the father, following him. "It is a good principle, when uncertain what to do, not to do anything, not to change your course. The result was just the same as though you had failed to notice the web."

With a sound like a harsh repeated sneeze, a startled agouti, a tailless brown rodent, bounded away from beneath a towering milk tree, whose fallen fruit it had been eating. A rufous piha,
a thrush-like bird unseen in the treetops, answered the sudden noise with a sharp whistle.

A palm trunk lay athwart the path, and a short distance beyond its severed top was its crown of great pinnate fronds, already far advanced in decay.

Edwin regarded the rotting palm sadly. "Unholy Week!" he exclaimed at last.

La Semana Santa or Holy Week was the time when trespassers entered the forest at Selva Alegre to steal the palm "hearts" which, along with fish, formed part of the traditional Easter Sunday feast. Since only a small part, no more than a few pounds, of a sixty- or eighty-foot palm was edible, a successful raider might destroy eight or ten stately trees, each perhaps a century old, make a bundle of the slender crown-shafts which contained the edible "hearts," and carry them off on his shoulder, leaving the rest of the palm to rot. Because it was impossible for a few people effectively to guard three hundred acres of tropical forest, in which visibility at ground level rarely exceeded a hundred feet, this ravage was repeated year after year, for all that could be done to prevent it. The fish for the feast were taken from the river, often by stunning them with an underwater explosion, and more than one hand had been blown off by the premature detonation of a home-made bomb. Because of these abuses, the Fernleys had come to refer to Easter as "Unholy Week." But since they were a small minority among devout Catholic neighbors, they were careful to keep this designation private.
"I fear that we must reconcile ourselves to the gradual spoliation of our beautiful forest," said Mr. Fernley. "When I came here, I called the place 'Selva Alegre,' because I intended to permit all the inhabitants of the woodland to live in undisturbed enjoyment of whatever satisfactions nature has provided for them. But I reckoned without my uncomprehending human neighbors, who believe that God placed all the animals on this earth to fill the insatiable human maw, and esteem nothing that can be neither eaten nor sold. They and their yelping hounds have just about exterminated the guans and the forest quail.

It has been long since I have seen one of the small forest deer that used to be abundant. And I believe that you will find the big toucans with the yellow and brown bills, as well as the chachalacas, far less common than when you were a boy."

"It's maddening, Father, but that seems to be the way with nature sanctuaries everywhere. I know people in the States who cannot keep hunters out of twenty acres of woodland around their homes. They are abused and insulted for trying to protect the animals whose presence around them is one of the greatest joys of their lives. The more one travels, the more one learns that people and their problems are much the same everywhere. I hope that our kind neighbors have not killed all the white-faced monkeys."

"At least one small band remains, doubtless because they have become exceedingly wary."

The path dipped downward through a stand of low palmas, whose clustered stems bristled with black spines as long and sharp as
needles. Soon the wayfarers reached a rivulet that tumbled down between the hills. The clear water glided over a ledge of rock, to rest in a still pool that reflected the great lacy fronds of a tall tree fern. Smaller ferns of varied forms crowded around the brink of the pool, grew over the exposed rocks, climbed up the trunks of the surrounding trees, or hung limply from their branches. Beside the pool was a ledge where, as a boy, Edwin used to sit reading poetry, his eyes often straying from the printed page to absorb the beauty of this enchanting spot, while his mind ranged afar in time and space. Soon, by common accord, the father and son settled on the rock and sat contemplating the limpid water.

The elder Fernley was the first to break the silence: "Here the spirit is invited to expand, to identify itself in calmness and love with all the surrounding life. If more men knew how to appreciate things like this, there would be less fighting and merciless competition; the world would be a far happier place."

"My thoughts often returned to this spot while I lived in Aunt Florence's apartment, whose comfort was, to me at least, no compensation for the lack of growing things around it."

"We are all delighted to have you with us again, Edwin — I no less than your mother, although I may not show it so obviously — and we would like you to stay with us always. But it seems a pity that, being so close to taking your doctor's degree, you do not continue until you have earned it. Conditions are rapidly changing in this country, as elsewhere. There is a good deal of Communist
agitation, and so-called Communists have even attempted to take forcible possession of titled lands here in El General. It may not always be as pleasant for us to live here as it has been. Or, as you grow older, you or your wife may desire a different kind of life, where you have more conveniences, more contacts with cultured people, greater facilities for educating your children. In that case, having a degree will make it easier to find a well-paid position. In scientific and academic circles, the man without a degree is at a disadvantage, even when competing for a job with others who might know less than he does."

"I do not think I shall soon tire of the kind of life in which I grew up, especially if, as I hope, I have a wife who likes it as much as I do," said Edwin, blushing ever so faintly. "But I have not abandoned my intention to earn my Ph. D. The botanical laboratory has lent me a whole chest of equipment, including microscopes and all their accessories, which is coming by boat, since air freight is so expensive. I hope it arrives before Christmas. My plan is to set up a little laboratory and make a thorough study of a plant that grows here, the great, tall heliconia or wild plantain, with the long, dangling, dull red inflorescences, that is found in second-growth woods and tall thickets. Then, when I have done as much as I can here, I intend to return to the university, complete those parts of my study for which I need more elaborate apparatus, and write my dissertation. It seemed a waste of opportunity to work with some greenhouse plant, when I could so readily study one in its natural environment, with abundant material. I believe that with a year here and another at the
university, I can complete my work for my degree, as I have already passed the necessary courses and absolved my language requirements. But what about Harold — what has he decided to do? When we met in Utrecht, he seemed genuinely glad to see me, but since returning, I have more than once felt that he was slightly antagonistic to me. I cannot imagine what I have done to offend him.

"Probably nothing," said Mr. Fernley. "It is simply the antagonism of opposite temperaments. Harold is very different from you and Violet, as from his mother and father. He takes after my Uncle Charles — my mother's brother, who was a colonel in the first World War and died in the Argonne — more than any other member of the family whom I have known. Harold is highly energized; his vital impulses are too strong for his head, and they sometimes push him too far. I suppose it's not his fault — poor boy! — he is as nature made him. Nature has been much kinder to you. You have good health and enough physical strength for the kind of life you will probably lead, if you learn how to husband it, yet not too much vital energy for your mind to control. Your intelligence is clear and it is matched by the warmth of your affections. The elements are so blended in you that they provide a sound foundation for a happy life. Yet you must not be over-confident; the best of us will go astray, if we fail to keep careful watch over ourselves. Your trouble, from a practical point of view, may be just that in you which I find most admirable, the nice balance of the several sides of your character: your warm
sympathies, for example, might withhold you from a course which would bring worldly success. Those whom the world deems heroes have generally had one dominant side of their character—ambition, or intellect, or thirst for holiness—that has overruled all the others, leading them to eminence as warriors, politicians, scientists, or saints. Harold has this kind of constitution; in a military society, he might well become a hero. But your chances of living a good and happy life are better than his.

A large brownish hummingbird darted out of the forest, poised, on wings vibrated into a haze, a yard above the limpid pool, then dropped straight down to it, half immersing its body. It did this twice more, then perched on a twig overhanging the water, where it preened its plumage as well as it could with such a long, curved bill, and wagged its long tail from side to side so rapidly that it became a blur of brown and white, as indistinct as its wings while it hovered.

"Yes," continued Mr. Fernley, after the hummingbird had flown off with a sharp ccheep through the forest undergrowth, "Harold is already giving Hazel and me considerable concern, and I fear our troubles are just beginning. Although he is not stupid, he shows little inclination to study. He went hunting deer and other animals with some of the young sparks from the village—Harold, who was born and grew up in a household regulated by love and compassion for all creatures. Perhaps it would be going too far to call him cruel, but he is lamentably lacking in that imaginative sympathy which you and Violet have in large measure. I fear that he may learn other bad habits from the unwholesome company.
he keeps. He happens to be more gregarious than the rest of us, yet there is a dearth of proper company for him in this neighborhood. I do not know what we should do with him. Perhaps the best would be to find him a job as timekeeper, or something like that, on a large coffee plantation in the central plateau or with the fruit company down on the coast, to give him some experience of the larger world."

"I'm sorry to hear that about Harold," said Edwin. "When he was a little boy, I took so much care of him that I still feel responsible for him, and would like to help him get straightened out. But how a boy raised as he was can send pellets of lead into the living flesh of animals, I cannot understand."

A morpho butterfly flew across the pool, its wide satiny wings sending forth flashes of the most intense azure.

"Father," said Edwin, after an interval of silence, "I have often wondered why you came here. You told us more than once, when we were children, how wild and sparsely inhabited this region was when you first saw it, and how you made the farm and the house and brought Mother here. I remember all that very well. What I should like to know is your motive for coming here, so far from all your family, with so many obstacles to overcome and hardships to endure, at least in the beginning. Perhaps you told me that when I was too young to understand. Now I believe that I could understand."

William Farnley picked up a fallen twig, broke off a small piece and threw it into the water before him, then watched the
little wave expand to the shore. He did this again before he
began to speak: "I was just a little younger than you are now,
and studying to become a professor of philosophy, when the
United States entered the First World War. All around me young
men were enlisting to fight and "make the world safe for democracy"—
as though more than a small fraction of the world were ready
for democracy! Carried away by the wave of patriotic fervor,
and perhaps influenced by the tradition that Socrates had with
credit served his country in arms, I enlisted in the army. Except
for the fact that I might have been drafted if I had not volun-
teered, that was a mistake. I was not cut out to be a soldier;
army life, with its gregarious living, its peremptory commands,
the crudeness in language and conduct of some of my comrades, was
hell to me, even before we went to the front. Still, there was
nothing to do but grit my teeth and make the best of it; and at
the end of the officers' training course, I was commissioned as a
captain."

He broke off another piece of stick and watched the wave
spread from the point where it fell into the pool. Then he con-
continued: "In due course we went to France in a tightly packed,
transport and became familiar with the muck and sordidness of
life in the trenches. One day at dawn we attacked the Germans,
behind the usual barrage of artillery fire. After leading my com-
pany across no-man's-land by creeping through the mire from
shell crater to shell crater, I was about to jump into the
enemy's trench, when I noticed a German soldier menacing me with
his bayonet. Just in time to save myself, I fired my revolver point-blank into his breast. He was a blue-eyed boy who could hardly have been twenty, and I shall never forget the expression on his face as he threw out his arms and fell. For years it troubled my sleep; even after three decades, the haunting memory has not left me. It makes me feel as though my limbs were shrinking into my body and my body contracting to a point — as though I wished to shrivel up and vanish. It is a most peculiar sensation, impossible to describe to another who has not experienced it."

"But I know what you mean, Father. It is the way I felt long ago, when I indiscernibly watched a neighbor operating on a bull calf with a kitchen knife. I could not watch the poor struggling little animal for long; it was too painful for me. I have only to think vividly of a knife cutting into living flesh, my own or another's, to have that feeling of shrinking all together return to me."

"I have not spoken about this to anyone before, not even to your mother," Mr. Fernley. "Those of us who went through the first world war rarely spoke about the more harassing of our experiences, which is perhaps regrettable; for if the full horror of war were more widely appreciated, perhaps people would be more careful to preserve peace. So that as it may, I am telling you this because it is pertinent to your question. You are a man now, and I think we should understand each other more than superficially.

"Soon after that, I was wounded in the thigh by a piece of shrapnel and carried back to a base hospital, which was a blessing,
for I doubt whether I could have discharged my revolver into another human being, even to save my life. In the next bed lay a young English soldier, who had also been wounded in action. While convalescing, we talked much and became friends. I learned that he had volunteered from Costa Rica, where his father was a coffee planter. Before we separated, he invited me to visit his plantation, if we both survived the war."

"I suppose he was Uncle Ted," remarked Edwin.

"Yes, his name was Theodore Gilman. My wound was long in healing; and before I could be sent back to the front, the armistice was signed. I returned to the university to resume my studies, but I could not regain interest in the technical points, the problems of logic and epistemology, which chiefly occupied our department of philosophy. After my experience in the war, it seemed to me that the great questions for philosophy to clear up were why there is so much evil in the world, and whether there is any higher power, any God or impersonal cosmic force, that would help us to improve things, if we could place ourselves in the proper relation with him or it. I studied the great systems of Idealistic philosophy, from the Indian Vedanta, Platonism and Neoplatonism to Hegel, Bradley and Royce, but they left me unconvinced; and I could readily see why modern philosophy was moving away from them. The new evolutionary philosophy of Bergson, then claiming much popular attention, did not convince me either; Spencer's pioneer attempt to formulate an evolutionary philosophy, then falling into neglect, seemed to me more solid and equally hopeful.

"Although my studies and reflections of this period failed
to answer the ultimate questions whose answers I so feverishly sought, they left me with one deep and abiding conviction, for which I am chiefly indebted to the sages of the ancient East. This was the conviction that we could never liberate our spirits and find peace, unless we abstained from violence of every sort. The halfway measure of treating our fellow men with loving kindness while callously exploiting the rest of the animate creation, as in our traditional Western morality, would never do."

Mr. Fernley tossed another bit of twig into the pool before him and watched the wave expand, then continued: "The more I read, the more nervous and unsettled I became, the more the old nightmare would haunt me. I needed a radical change, and remembering the invitation of the British soldier, I came to Costa Rica for a long vacation.

"The rest is the story I have told you more than once: How in the dry season Ted and I took horses and rode over the long mountain trail to this valley, which was then thinly settled; how we fell in love with this wilderness and decided to make a farm together, he because he thought it would be a good investment, I because I believed that such an undertaking would be the best way to regain my peace of mind; how for a few hundred colones we bought a claim; how we made a thatched rancho for a temporary dwelling and lived together, while with peones we planted crops and built a house; how he was called back to manage the home plantation when his father's health declined; how I married his sister and brought her here to live; how he gave her his share in the
farm as a wedding present."

"That was a truly munificent gift."

"At that time, the monetary value of the farm was small, but the gift was generous because he had put so much of himself into it....What's that?"

Far above them the boughs shook. Sounds like a subdued human cough became audible, and presently the men beside the pool glimpsed a little whitish face peering down at them through a gap in the foliage. Soon others appeared, and the watchers on the ground became the focus of half a dozen pairs of troubled brown eyes. Alarmed by what they saw, the monkeys climbed higher and retreated through the treetops, making great leaps from the leafy extremity of one bough to the end of another, or running along the catenary loop of a liana that bridged the gap from treetop to treetop.

"How glad I am that the white-faces are still with us!" exclaimed Edwin. "I counted eight, including a baby riding its mother's back, and there must have been more off in the treetops beyond view."

Rang!

The woodland quiet was shattered so suddenly that both men gave a little involuntary jump.

"What's that?"

Both started to run in the direction of the shot, which sounded closer than it was. They reached the top of the slope just in time to see the little black body of a white-face release its hold on
a high bough and crash to the ground. A big burly man rushed
toward it with uplifted gun butt.

"Stop!" father and son shouted together.

As the surprised poacher turned to face them, they recog-
nized him as Raul Garro. He had narrow eyes set in a pasty face,
a broad nose with wide nostrils, a spare brown mustache, and a
receding chin. He lived with a fat querulous woman and three
children in a ramshackle hut set close beside the river, feeding
his family by poaching, stealing, begging, and occasionally doing
an honest morning's work. Many a bunch of plantains or bananas,
many a stock of cassava or taro, that mysteriously vanished from
the neighbors' plantings, might have been traced to his hovel.
Although nobody had much doubt where they went, and from time to
time he was threatened by an irate farmer, nobody seemed able to
stop these depredations. When a cow or a pig died of some undiag-
nosed ailment, Raul would offer his services as gravedigger. After
the animal had been covered by five feet of earth and he had col-
lected his wage from the unfortunate owner, he might be seen re-
turning home, bearing over his shoulder a bloody sack full of flesh
which he had hacked with his machete from the dead animal's bones.
On this tainted meat that nobody else would touch, he and his
family would feast to repletion. Opossums, armadillos, porcupines
and even snakes provided similar repasts. The Fernleys had long
known him as "The Cave Man"; but as Edwin grew older, he suspected
that this was not quite fair to our remote ancestors.

As Edwin and his father came closer, they saw that the white-
face was already dead.
"How dare you shoot our monkeys?" demanded Mr. Fernley.

"Haven't I told you a hundred times to stay out of this farm?"

"My wife is very grave. She's suffering from a bad liver and only monkey grease will cure her," whined Raul desperatingly.

"Your woman is suffering from the blows and foul food you give her. Everyone in the neighborhood knows how you abuse your woman."

"Let me take the monkey. My wife is really very grave."

"The monkey is dead anyway. Why not give it to him in exchange for his blunderbuss? It may be a good while before he can get another, and meanwhile the animals will have peace," suggested Edwin in English.

When this exchange was proposed to the Cave Man, he stooped to pick up the dead monkey without releasing his grasp on his weapon, muttering "I'm not such a fool."

"Leave that animal and get off this farm," commanded Mr. Fernley in a stern voice. "March!"

Like a disgruntled bear, the man dropped the monkey and began to shuffle off through the forest.

"Not that way! By the path, so we can see that you do no more damage," said Mr. Fernley, pointing to the pathway. "Could you bring the monkey, Edwin, so that he does not circle around and carry it off."

"Why don't we disarm him?" Edwin asked his father, as they walked behind the retreating poacher.

"He's such a burly brute that I doubt whether we could wrench the gun away from him. He may have reloaded it."
"But at last he has been caught with the two witnesses which the law requires. Couldn't we have him locked up?" queried Edwin.

"The local authorities have become corrupt during the present administration, and they would doubtless send him to prison if we greased the proper palms. But they probably could not keep him there long for killing a monkey, and when he came out he might be worse than ever. We must look into the matter."

They saw the intruder to the edge of the forest. As he trudged off through the clearing, he mumbled: "You'll pay for this, you filthy foreigners."

"Did you hear that, Father?" asked Edwin. "What do you think he will do?"

"There's no telling, but you can be sure that it will be mean and underhanded, for he is as cowardly as he is vengeful and cruel. We must be on our guard. I suppose that the best thing to do with the poor monkey is to bury it in the forest where it lived."

"But it would be hard to dig a big enough hole with only our machetes. Should I go back for a pickax and shovel?"

"Perhaps I had better go while you guard the corpse," said Mr. Fernley. "I'm expecting a man who wants to buy some corn. If I cannot return myself, I'll send somebody with the tools. We won't keep you waiting long."
Chapter 5
THE BROTHERS

Edwin laid the monkey on the ground and stood regarding its slight body, its little hands, its brown eyes glazed in death. How tragic, he thought, that the lowest sort of men, those who contribute least to society—who could hardly exist in a good society—should be able and permitted to destroy the things that mean so much to people better able to appreciate them. Oddly enough, it is not the men who seem closest to man’s primal condition of life in nature, but those who have progressed farthest from this primal state and have the most refined minds, who find the greatest values in the natural world and have the most brotherly feeling for humbler forms of life.

Flies were already beginning to hover over the dead monkey’s body. Drawing his machete from its sheath, Edwin cut a few of the great wide leaves of a shellflower that grew at the forest’s edge and laid them over the corpse. Presently he heard a whistle and, looking up, saw Harold advancing through the new coffee plantation, with a pickax and shovel over his shoulder. He had already chosen the spot for the grave, beneath a tall campana tree whose wide white blossoms were scattered over the ground. Harold loosened the earth with vigorous strokes of the pickax, and Edwin removed it with the shovel. Now and then he used his machete to sever a root that interfered with the digging. When the hole was deep enough, he lined the bottom with shellflower leaves, laid the
corpses on them, covered it with more leaves, then started to fill the hole with the loosened earth.

Harold looked on with amused tolerance. "Why do the Fernleys always have to be different from everyone else?" he asked. "Who else hereabout would bury a monkey like a Christian? It's a wonder you did not call the padre to give a funeral service! Our neighbors would laugh if they saw what we are doing. They would either eat the monkey or leave it for the vultures."

"What we are doing is only a gesture of respect for a distant relation, an expression of our own feelings toward a being that had life. I doubt that it makes any difference to the monkey how its corpse is treated," said Edwin.

"I suppose our refusal to eat meat is also only a gesture—one that sets us apart from everyone else and makes us bothersome when we go visiting, especially to Grandmother, who is put to much trouble preparing special dishes when we stay with her."

"Yes, you might regard it as a gesture, a permanent gesture of protest against some of the crueller aspects of life, especially against predation, which is the ugliest, most revolting thing in nature."

"But what good does it do?" persisted Harold. "Do you imagine that, even if all people could be persuaded to become vegetarians, animals would stop killing each other for food? And if they did, they would multiply to such an extent that even the grass-eaters and fruit-eaters would die of starvation."

"No, I do not expect any such effect in the foreseeable
future; although no student of evolution would be rash enough
to predict what the outcome may be, millions of years of years
hence, of some present feeble beginning. When you study evo-
lation and realize what long ages it took to make man or any of
the more complex organisms, and you consider the tremendously
long future we have ahead of us, according to the astronomers,
if these new atom bombs do not blow mankind from the earth—
when you think of all this, you become impatient with those
people who will take no course which does not seem likely to
effect a great improvement within a generation."

"But if you are making a gesture, why not be consistent?"
continued Harold. "Father would never permit us to eat meat;
but we carry leather sheaths for our machetes, wear leather
puttees, and put leather saddles on our horses, to mention only
some of the leather goods we use. Leather comes from slaughtered
animals."

"From dead, but not necessarily from slaughtered, animals,"
corrected him.

"But Edwin, they might die of old age or disease. But it would
certainly be nicer and more consistent if we could do without
things torn from dead animals. I have no doubt that superior
substitutes—plastics or treated fabrics, for example—could be
found for all the uses to which leather is now put, if people
would devote to this problem a tenth—no, a hundredth part—of
the time and money they now spend on devising means to destroy
devout Hindus
each other. I have read that in India they saddle their horses
without any leather at all. But here where we are so isolated
from others who think as we do, it is difficult to get things
like that; and Father has not wished to impose too many inconveniences upon us. But you cannot deny that by refusing to eat meat all these years, we have spared the lives of many animals and saved people the brutalizing work of slaughtering them. And we ourselves are the better for it, because we feel more at peace with all creatures."

"So you let the Cave Man keep his blunderbuss," remarked Harold, abruptly changing the subject. "If I had been there, I'd bet he would not have kept his gun that has done so much damage in our forest."

"Even if you are the heaviest and strongest one in the family, Harold, I doubt whether you could have handled that powerful brute, unless you have learned the tricks of jujitsu. Besides, we were not certain that his weapon was not charged. There was time to reload even a muzzle-loader before we came in sight of him."

A short walk brought the two brothers out of the forest into the new coffee plantation. Already the sky, which had been so beautifully clear at sunrise, was nearly overclouded. A small airplane hummed overhead, outlined against a white mass of cumulus cloud.

"Whose 'plane is that?" asked Edwin.

"They tell me that it belongs to an American who has come back from the war and bought a big tract of land down the Térraba Valley to start a cattle farm. He must be rich, for he goes back and forth in his own 'plane. Now, that's what I would like to do, have a big farm and my own airplane, so that I could
go down to the coast to swim or fish, or up to San José to 
watch the races or a football contest, without any trouble at 
all. That would be the life!"

"But you would not want a cattle farm, Harold?"

"What's wrong with a cattle farm? It's the best way to make 
money in this valley where transportation is so difficult. If, 
instead of fooling with grains that take so much hand labor, 
Father had put a few hundred hectares in pasture and fattened 
cattle, we would be far better off today. Doubtless we could have 
our own airplane, and a jeep, and take more trips to the States 
or wherever we wished to go."

"What's wrong with a cattle farm?" Edwin reiterated in 
amazement. "Think of the driving of frightened animals, the 
throwing, the branding, the mutilation of the bull calves, the 
slaughtering or selling for slaughter! Father saw so much violence 
and killing in the first World War that ever since he has been 
careful to avoid violence in all its forms. He does not like to 
impede his will on any creature, as by driving resisting cattle. 
Besides, the work of a cattle farm makes men coarse and callous."

"But the owner needn't do it himself," explained Harold.
"He can hire men to do it for him. Do you think that rich guy 
who flew past in his 'plane is going to take care of his cattle, 
and with his own hands cure their sores that are full of squirming 
fly maggots? He'll live in style in San José and employ an over-
seer for his farm."

"Some people cannot so easily brush aside the feeling of res-
ponsibility for their acts. They believe that when you do something
through a paid agent, you are just as responsible as though you
did it yourself. Father would never consent to set people to
tasks that would coarsen or degrade them."

"I don’t think the cattlemen I know are worse than other men," said Harold. "They seem to me about as good as anyone else, ex-
cept perhaps a few exceptional people like Father and Mother."

"The whole trouble is that average good people are not good
enough," declared Edwin. "That’s the reason why the world is in
such a hideous mess today. Unless a few of us adopt higher
standards of conduct and keep the possibility of them before
other people, even if we cannot yet persuade others to adopt
these principles, the world will never improve."

They had now reached the old plantation, where the pickers
were filling their sacks with the garnered red berries, to carry
them to the receiving shed before the threatening rain descended.
Edwin, who was leading, suddenly turned and said to his brother:

"You are so full of energy and eager for adventure that I
think you would be happy as a petroleum geologist, a mining
engineer, or something of that sort. If they are any good, they
are sent to all sorts of places, have plenty of adventures, and
make big money, too. You would have to buckle down and study hard
for a few years, in a college or technical school. It would cost
the family something, but I believe we could meet the expenses.
If I get my degree in another two years, as I hope to do, I
should be able to contribute to them. I believe that Father and
Mother would be glad if you did something like that."

"If I went to college, I would not have my nose stuck in a
book or my eye glued to a microscope all the time, as you did. I would wish to join a fraternity, and go out for athletics, and have a good time. I wouldn't go to college unless I could eat what everybody else does; not to eat as others do sets one apart from them and makes it hard to belong to the crowd. Father probably wouldn't send me to college if he knew I would eat like everybody else, but I wouldn't deceive him."

"It's tragic that the adoption of moral principles higher or of wider application than those current among one's contemporaries usually estranges one from them. The reason is, no doubt, that in refraining, on moral grounds, from doing as they do, you tacitly accuse them of doing wrong, and, perhaps subconsciously, they resent it. But that's the price that must be paid for all moral advance, and a society which lacks a few people who are courageous enough to pay it will stagnate morally. Yet if you don't feel strong enough to stand alone, I believe that Father wouldn't insist that you do so. You are old enough to think for yourself and choose the principles that will regulate your life, as I have chosen mine. Certainly when we live in our parents' house we must conform to its ways, especially when we are children; but I don't believe they would insist on your following practices which you disapprove, when you go away to study. Didn't I say a while ago that Father doesn't like to impose his will on any creature? That would include his grown sons."

As the brothers passed through the plantation, they overtook an old woman bent beneath a sack of coffee berries that she had picked. "Let me help you, Tia Flora," said Harold, taking the
sack from her and slinging it over his own strong shoulder. He carried it to the thatched receiving shed, while the woman followed him, profuse in her thanks. Edwin was pleased to see that his younger brother was not devoid of kindness, even if his sympathy did not extend so widely as his father's, or Edwin's own. Nevertheless, when the brothers reached the house, each felt miles away from the other.
Chapter 6

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Violet Fernley's bedroom, in the southern wing of the house, was a pleasant chamber with white walls, a ceiling of planed boards, and flowered curtains at its two windows. The furnishings were simple but adequate. The light iron bedstead, painted blue, had been transported over the mountains by air; but all the other pieces had been made on the farm, chiefly by Mr. Fernley and a cabinet maker whom he had employed. There were a large wardrobe of stained and polished hardwood, a dressing table with a mirror, a massive chest, a bedside table, and several chairs. On the walls hung photographs of Violet's father and mother, of Edwin standing by Callip's head, of the three children in bathing suits beside the river, of the girls' school in Georgia which Violet and Elvira had attended together for three years. There were also several pictures of flowers which Elvira had painted in watercolor for her. The bed was covered with a light blue spread on which Violet had embroidered sprays of golden orchids with their green foliage and butterflies hovering among them. On the bedside table was a white cloth, which she had decorated with a border composed of the flowers whose name she bore. Everything about the room revealed a delicate feminine taste, chaste and restrained.

Violet's taste was also revealed by the books which filled the shelves that Edwin had made for her. Although she read many novels, on the long wet afternoons of the rainy season and in bed at night before turning down the lamp, she was most discriminating,
and would soon lay aside a book which did not meet her rather exacting requirements. She agreed with her father that the world contains enough unpleasant and pitiful characters without their multiplication in literature, which should be devoted to the declination of characters that one can respect. Why, he would ask, should one spend hours with a character in fiction whose presence one could not endure for five minutes in real life? Although, to be true to life, a novel must doubtless contain a few rogues and fools, they should fill minor roles, being introduced chiefly to serve as foils for the development of the principal actors. No plot, however skilfully woven, however charged with thrills and suspense, would hold Violet long if the hero or heroine were not a person whom she could admire or love, with whom she could identify herself.

One of her favorite novelists was Jane Austen, whose heroines were models of integrity and sound common sense combined with constancy and warm affection. For much the same reason, she loved George Eliot, whose *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner* she had read more than once. Although she admired Thackeray’s hero Henry Esmond for his generosity and steadfast devotion, she thought that only a foolish infatuation could have made him waste so many precious years of his life vainly waiting for Beatrix, whose loveliness was all on the outside, masking a selfish and fickle character. Of more recent writers, she was fond of W. H. Hudson and John Locke (the novelist, not the philosopher); and when she read Spanish, she preferred the Argentinian Hugo Wast, with his tales of solitary maidens on the lonely pampas. Among the poets, her favorites were Wordsworth, Cowper, Keats, Tennyson and Longfellow,
and she often returned to the manse of Stephen Phillips --
all of which showed that she read poetry for its rhythm, imagery
and sentiment rather than for its subtlety, for which she thought
prose the proper medium. She had little time for modern meterless
poetry, holding it to be inferior to the best prose not only in
intelligibility but even in color and cadence.

Violet dwelt much in the realm of fancy because, although
she lived among those who loved her as much as she loved them
and had enough household duties to keep her active, she had few
of the outside contacts and diversions usual with young women of
her age. At twenty-one, she was already well beyond the age at
which most of the girls in the neighborhood were married; she
knew a number, no older than herself, who were already mothers
of two or even three children, including some already dead.
However, she did not compare herself with them, and her continuing
spinsterhood would not have worried her, if she had been acquainted
with a few eligible young men. From time to time, some of the
bolder youths of the neighborhood, sons of the more prosperous
farmers, had made diffident advances to her; but they never per-
sisted, as though intuitively recognizing that a marriage between
people who differed so widely in culture and education would be
most unsuitable.

On her occasional visits to her mother's family on the central
plateau, Violet had mingled sparingly with the polite society of
the country, and she had met young men, both of the English-
speaking foreign colony and of the old Spanish-speaking families,
who had been attracted to her. But the resulting intimacy never
advanced beyond a transient friendship, which faded away after a few afternoons or evenings spent together, or the exchange of a few letters. These worldly young men failed to understand the maiden who had grown up in the backwoods, so charming and cultured, so well posted on what was happening in the contemporary world, yet so unenthusiastic about their social, political, or financial ambitions. For Violet's ideal of manhood had been formed by the two men she knew best, her father and her elder brother, both of whom differed greatly, in habits and aspirations, from any other man she had met. She was certain that, unless she found her ideal, she would never marry. To be joined for life to a man with whom she had no deep sympathy, to feel stirring within her a new life which had been planted there by one whom she did not respect and love with her whole heart, would be a torture and a profanation.

On the afternoon of the day following Edwin's return, Violet and her mother sat sewing in the daughter's room, where they could converse without disturbing Mr. Fernley, who was reading in the library, which was also the family sitting room. The mother was darning socks, while the daughter put the finishing touches on a new dress she had made for herself.

"You cannot imagine how happy I am to have Edwin back," Hazel Fernley was saying. "How tall and handsome he has become, and how well he speaks!"

"I don't need to imagine, because I feel just as you do," said the daughter.

"I believe that one of the things that brought him back, perhaps the chief attraction, was Elvira. I know that they have cor-
responded regularly ever since his last visit home."

"Yes, and did you notice, Mother, how he kissed her when he arrived? That surprised me, because Edwin was always so correct and respectful in his conduct toward girls. I wonder whether he has changed during his long residence in the States. I hope that he has not learned to carry on the way you see Americans doing in the movies."

"I don't attach much importance to that kiss," said the mother. "It was a brotherly kiss, just like the one he gave you. Edwin is very perceptive, and he did not wish to make Elvira feel like an outsider by treating her differently from you and me. After all, they grew up together. I have other reasons for believing that he has come to propose to her."

"Elvira will make him a loving and devoted wife. How faithful she has been to her father, keeping house for him while his wife stays in the city with their younger children who are in school! Do you remember that Mr. Davis said, the other day, that Costa Rican women make good wives, but the men make bad husbands? Why should that be, Mother?"

"Because from boyhood the males of the upper class families are all too often humored and indulged, made to feel that they are superior beings whom the womenfolk are placed on this earth to serve and worship; because, too, they can without censure indulge in liberties which, if taken by the other sex, would wreck an unmarried girl's life and lead to the divorce of a married woman. If Elvira marries Edwin, she will get a husband on whose faithfulness she can rely."
"But wouldn't you be sorry to lose him, Mother?"

"I think it must torture a mother when a loved son weds a woman she deems unworthy of him; but to see him united to one whom she respects must be a great satisfaction. If Edwin marries Elvira, I shall not lose a son but gain another daughter."

After they had plied their needles in silence for an interval, Violet said: "Mother, I have sometimes wondered whether you ever regretted coming here to live with Father in the backwoods. You gave up many things that you might have had if you had married some rich planter or business man and stayed outside." (To dwellers in the backwoods, "outside" means the more settled part of the country; "inside" refers to districts still more remote from the center.)

"I had an offer of matrimony from a man who now owns one of the richest plantations in Guatemala," said Mrs. Fernley. "If I had accepted him, I should now have a palatial home, with a staff of servants and all the most modern conveniences, a car or two, gowns from New York or Paris as I desired, a trip abroad every year, and what not—that is, if we had not already separated."

"Why didn't you accept his offer?"

"For the simple reason that I did not love him. He was too conceited and flippant for my taste. If I had married him for what he could give me, it would have been marriage only in the legal sense."

"So you are satisfied that you came to live here in the back—"
woods with Father?"

"I do not regret my choice. If we have had few luxuries, we have lacked nothing essential. I have had the most important things for a woman to have, a loved and respected husband whose constancy I have never for an instant doubted—if he sometimes seems aloof and distant, I know it is because his mind is absorbed in its cogitations, not because it is wandering after another woman—and three fine children."

"Mother, do you love both your sons equally well?"

"What a question to ask a mother! Of course I love them both, although I approve of Edwin more than of Harold. Harold has become difficult and rebellious, but he has many good points. He has always been most helpful in the house and on the farm—even more than Edwin. Not that Edwin ever refused to lend a hand when it was needed, but even as a boy he was often so absorbed in his studies or his reading that one hesitated to interrupt him. Harold, on the other hand, seemed to welcome the opportunity to drop his book and gather fruit, catch and saddle a horse, or run an errand. Harold is now like a young colt feeling his strength. I hope that after he has had a good run, he will settle down and be steady."

"Harold resents not having been raised on meat. He believes that if he had eaten like everybody else, he would now be bigger and stronger," said Violet.

"As though his chief trouble were not that he now has more energy than he knows what to do with."
"Mother, did you ever regret giving up meat?"

"At first, I believed that I was making a sacrifice for William's sake, because I foresaw that it would never do for a husband and wife to have such different customs. But after living with him for a while, my eyes were opened and I saw that I had made, not a sacrifice for his sake, but an improvement in my way of life for my own sake, or rather, for the sake of something bigger than either of us, the ideal of living at peace with all beings and harming nothing, so far as we are able. Even if I should be left alone, I could not resume my old careless habits; for one must above all be true to his inmost self, and the way I now live accords better with that self than the way I lived before I met William. Formerly, if something were set before me on the table, I rarely thought about the violence, the suffering of animals and the brutalizing work of men, that its presence there involved. Now that I have formed the habit of looking beyond what is immediately present, there are many things that I cannot eat or use."

"In one respect, I have been more fortunate than you, for I was brought up in the better way from the start, and shall not have to change," said Violet, sewing another button on her dress.

"I only hope you will find a husband who will appreciate your better ways and adopt them, for it may be difficult for you to change to his. I am glad that Eugene Rivers is planning to stay with us again next year. He was a good, sensible, considerate boy, and very well bred. Doubtless he has become a man whom one can love and respect. Who knows what may come of his visit?"
"Yes, who knows," echoed Violet, seeming to concentrate all her attention on her button.

After another interval of silent sewing, she remarked:
"So the Cave Man threatened to take revenge on us, because he was ordered off the farm without the monkey he had shot. What twisted notions of justice he has! I thought that revenge was repayment of an injury received; but he wants to injure us again, simply because we resisted the first injury he inflicted on us."

"That way of thinking is all too frequent around here. Many of our neighbors feel that they have an account to settle with the man who will not permit them to abuse his property as they wish. Probably that was the primitive way of thinking. I have read that in certain tribes that carry on perpetual feuds, the killing of a man in retaliation for a killing is not regarded as the settlement of the account, so that the two tribes may henceforth live in peace. The second killing is regarded as a fresh aggression, which can only be balanced by a third, and so on indefinitely, so that the feud is never-ending. That way of thinking is far from dead in the world. I only hope that Carro will do nothing worse than cut a fence or steal some more plantains."

"It would be terrible if he shot Father or one of the boys from ambush, while they are walking about the farm."

"It's getting late, and I must go and see about the supper," said Mrs. Fernley, rolling up the last pair of socks that she had mended and putting away her sewing.

After her mother left the room, Violet went to the drawer of her dressing table and removed a snapshot of Edwin and Eugene Rivers, taken during their last visit three years earlier. After
gazing at it for a while, she carefully replaced it in its envelope and returned it to the drawer.

"I wonder if he has changed much," she said to herself. "Yes, who knows what will come of his visit."
Chapter 7
THE LOVERS

In the vivacious account of Edwin's homecoming with which Elvira entertained her father soon after her return to Santa Teresa, she omitted mention of Edwin's kiss. Kisses, those voiceless words whereby the lips tell things difficult for the tongue to express, seem always to matter more to the fairer than to the stronger sex; and Elvira was at an age when kisses, and all they can signify, are especially important. She was being courted by a brilliant young lawyer, the scion of one of the most prominent families in the Capital; and her parents, particularly her mother, were doing all they could to promote his suit. Someday, they hinted, he might become president of the republic, and she the first lady of the land. In the preceding dry season, when Doña Luisa, Elvira's mother, had brought her younger daughters to pass the school vacation at Santa Teresa, the lawyer had spent several days on the plantation, charming everyone by his noble bearing, his handsome face, and his affable courtesy, which seemed to cost him no effort. But he had distressed Elvira by going out too often with his shotgun, and when he proudly presented her with a beautiful scaled pigeon that he had brought down in flight, she turned her head away from the limply hanging body. From her long association with the Fernleys, she had learned to take a different view of such matters.
The letters which Edwin and Elvira had continued to exchange during his years in the North were, for the most part, such as might have passed between a brother and sister. She told him of the happenings on the farm, her periodic visits to the Capital, the books she read. He wrote about the progress of his studies, his friendships, his aspirations, his adventures in the holidays. Although, from the first, the correspondence revealed warm attachment on both sides, only the latest of Edwin's letters contained hints of stronger feeling. These letters, which Elvira had carefully preserved over the years, tied up with blue ribbons, had not prepared her for the kiss she received. It was, to be sure, just a brotherly kiss on the cheek, such as he had given Violet; yet even that was perhaps more than a modest young man should have done in front of others. She had felt the blood mount swiftly to her cheeks, and hoped that none of the onlookers had noticed a blush. To all appearances just a brotherly kiss — yet her feminine intuition detected more in it than that.

A few days after his return, Edwin invited Elvira to go riding with him. She suggested that they explore a road which, while he was away, had been made along the ridge west of the Aguas Claras, leading up into the foothills. They set forth soon after sunrise, so as to be back before the afternoon deluge began, Edwin on Gallip, while Elvira, looking very trim in brown slacks and white shirt, rode her roan mare. Here and there along the way they passed new cabina, made of rough, unpainted boards and thatched with sugarcane leaves, standing amid pastures that were still studded with stumps and littered with charred logs. After
ascending gradually for several miles, the rough roadway entered a stand of great oak trees, where the rollicking, good-humored rack up rack up of some acorn woodpeckers drew the riders' attention. Stopping their horses, they set for a while watching the birds, so oddly attired in black, white and red, as they flew busily back and forth, plucking acorns from the trees, placing them in crevices to be split with well-directed blows of their strong bills, then storing the fragments in crannies in the wood or bark high above the ground.

"What lovely orchids!" exclaimed Elvira, calling Edwin's attention to some large, pale lavender flowers that stood out from a mossy stump on slender stems. The corollas were unequal, and on the largest was a pale yellow spot.

Edwin dismounted to examine the flowers more closely. Then he carefully removed one of the plants from the moss in which it grew. Passing it to Elvira, he said:

"I used to call these flowers orchids, too, but now I know better. They are bladderworts. Notice the tiny delicate bladders that grow on special leaves which creep like roots through the moss. They are traps to catch minute creatures, which are digested and nourish the plant, just as in the larger bladders of the yellow-flowered bladderworts that float in still ponds in the North."

The road narrowed to a muddy trail traversing the forest. From the moist, ferny depths of the woodland came the black-faced solitaire's exquisitely modulated whistles, calm and pure. Presently the riders glimpsed one of the gray birds with bright
orange legs and bill. Far above them in the treetops, a bellbird was sounding his far-carrying notes; and after a while they saw him, standing on the topmost branch of a tall tree, his pure white head and neck contrasting elegantly with his rich brown body. Three long, string-like wattles hung from the base of his stout black bill. His mouth revealed a cavernous black interior, when opened widely to emit notes that seemed to come from a wooden clapper rather than a metallic bell.

They continued to ascend until the forest gave way to a new clearing, cluttered with massive trunks and branches that had been only partly consumed by fire. To the left, the mountainside fell away steeply, permitting an unobstructed view over the wide, mountain-rimmed basin of El General. Here the travellers dismounted, tied their horses where they could nibble the sprouting grass, and sat on a log to enjoy the prospect.

"It saddens me to see how the forest is shrinking before the inroads of the settlers," remarked Edwin, gazing pensively over the landscape. "So much of it has gone up in smoke since I last looked over this valley. So much natural beauty destroyed! So many birds and other creatures deprived of their ancestral homes! Except ourselves, nobody thinks of preserving even a little of it, to show future generations what it was like."

"The people around here hate trees," said Elvira. "They regard them as enemies which must be destroyed, so they can plant corn and make pastures. They will not leave one near their cabins, for fear it will fall on them in a windstorm."

"How impious! We should love trees, not only for their beauty,
but because they are the mothers of our minds."

"I don't understand, unless you are calling us blockheads."

"No, I am not being facetious," protested Edwin. "I am quite earnest. We owe to trees whatever intelligence we have beyond that of other animals, hence we should revere them as our foster mothers."

"How is that?" queried Elvira, perplexed.

"It is because our remote ancestors dwelt in trees that our forelimbs are hands rather than a second pair of feet. And without our hands, our minds would never have evolved very far; for a fine intelligence has little 'survival value,' and it could hardly be promoted by natural selection, if it lacks means for putting its brilliant ideas into practice. We sometimes wish that, for their own sakes, animals could be made more intelligent. But to become much more intelligent than they are might be a great misfortune for them, for without hands or other equally versatile organs for carrying out their projects, their lives might be embittered by perpetual frustration. One of the old Greek philosophers --Anaxagoras, as I recall-- remarked that man is the most intelligent of animals because he has hands. And we owe our hands to trees."

"Therefore, we should never use our hands to hurt a tree. Is that the conclusion to be drawn from your argument?" asked Elvira.

"It would be delightful if we could live without harming trees, or anything else, for that matter. The more that I study nature and see the marvellous intricacy of the least living thing, the more reluctant I become to destroy any organized being."

"You were always a thoughtful boy, Edwin, different from all the others I know --gentler, but certainly no less manly. That's the reason why I could never forget you."

"Not even when you are in San José, and all the stylish young"
men are paying court to you?"

"That's rather exaggerated. Still, some of them have been persistent in their attentions, but they do not displace you from my thoughts."

"I heard from Violet that you had some very flattering offers. I wonder that you have not accepted one of them."

"Since I have not fallen madly in love with any of these gallant young men, I can think calmly about the consequences of such a marriage. It is not likely to give me the kind of life that I should like to lead."

"How not?" asked Edwin.

"I suppose that if I married into those circles, I should perforce become like the other women who belong to them, devoting much time to entertaining and being entertained, playing cards, trying to make myself beautiful...."

"That would be superfluous, nature has attended to that."

"...and leaving my children, if I had any, to the care of hired girls. I should wish to give more time to my husband and children. I think a mother is justified in leaving even small children much in the care of others, only if she believes they are a better influence than she could be. Little children so readily acquire from ignorant people wrong attitudes which may hurt them for the rest of their lives, because it is most difficult for reason to change such attitudes after we are older. Therefore, I should like to be much with my children, helping them to love trees and whatever else is worthy of their love."

"That is what our parents chiefly instilled into us—to love."
But they also insisted on responsibility and discipline, which so many children lack these days. I suppose that is the reason why we had such a happy childhood at Selva Alegre."

"Life on a farm is certainly best for children," said Elvira, "although it raises problems when they are ready to go to school, or need a doctor. But it should be easier here, now that we have the highway to the outside world."

"Easier in some ways and harder in others. We shall have more conveniences but less freedom from outside interference."

For a while they sat in silence, gazing over the wide valley, where here and there a stretch of red roadway, an isolated farm—

the steeple of

house, a cluster of buildings; a little church, or the sparkle
of a stream, stood out from the prevailing greenery. A large
black toucan with a yellow breast flew out of a neighboring
treetop. Its huge, yellow-and-chestnut bill seemed to bear it
earthward, until with an effort it regained altitude; and so
alternately rising and falling, it traced an undulatory course
across the clearing. Four others straggled behind it, one by one.

A squirrel scolded harshly from a nearby stump.

Elvira was the first to break the silence: "You thought that
I would forget about you in the gay life of the city. What I
wonder is that you did not forget about your childhood playmate
of the backwoods while you were in the States. You must have met
many beautiful, intelligent girls at college."

"Certainly I met some who were easy to look at, but they were
often frivolous or stupid. And in the graduate school I came in
contact with some very intelligent young women, but they were not
as pretty as they were clever. Perhaps I am too hard to please, but I never found just the combination of feminine qualities that suited me. Or perhaps the trouble was that I had already met my ideal, and none of the others could compete with her."

A trogon, glittering green with a red belly that was separated from his green chest by a white bar, alighted on a dead branch at the forest's edge. Perching very upright, he repeated low, soft notes at measured intervals.

"It's strange," said Elvira, "but whenever I look over a grand scene like this, I feel a touch of melancholy. Such a view saddens my spirit at the same time that it expands and exhilarates it. I always wish to see what is beyond the farthest mountain range, and since I cannot, I feel an unsatisfied hunger. I wonder whether you understand what I am trying to say."

"Yes, I know exactly what you feel. Our minds are insatiable creatures, they hunger to encompass the whole of existence. Since it is impossible for them to experience as widely as they crave to do, they are touched with melancholy. But we should do what we can to relieve the distress caused by their own finitude. Maybe some day we can travel together and see more of the world."

"Yes, I hope so, Edwin. But now I think we should travel homeward. If we stay much longer, we shall be thoroughly drenched."

Edwin tightened the saddle girth of Elvira's mare and helped her to mount. Then he jumped on Gallip. Without urging, the horses started down the trail. After they had passed through the forest and were riding between the newly made farms, Elvira said:

"Do you remember Ursula, the black-haired girl who used to
help in our kitchen? Two years ago, she married a young fellow who worked for us, and they live in the next cabin. I am sure she would appreciate it if we drop in to greet her."

"I wonder whether we should, Elvira. The country people think it very wrong for a youth and a maiden to ride out together as we are doing -- scandalous conduct. Perhaps it would be better to ride past without drawing attention to ourselves."

"But I saw her peeping out at us as we came up, and that is how I know where she lives. She will be hurt if we ride by again without speaking to her. Since she knows that we grew up almost as a brother and sister, perhaps she will not think badly of us."

"Let's visit her, then."

The cabin in which Ursula dwelt stood in a pasture that was entered through a gateway closed with horizontal poles. As Edwin dismounted to push back the bars, Ursula emerged from the cabin to welcome her visitors. She was a short, fair-skinned girl with regular, pleasant features beneath a mass of black hair. She wore a loose dress of flowered calico and her strong, broad feet were bare. Her smile of greeting revealed a set of teeth whose perfect regularity and whiteness any belle might envy, but she owed them to the dentist's art rather than to nature. She placed an arm lightly around Elvira's shoulder, in a half-embrace which her visitor returned in kind.

"Buenos días, Niña Elvira. How glad I am to see you!" she said.

"Good day, Ursula. I'm happy to see you looking so well. You remember Don Edwin, I'm sure."

"Good day, señor. How are you?"
"I'm very well, thank you, Ursula, and I hope you and your family are the same."

"How are your father and mother, Niña Elvira, and all the children?" asked Ursula. "I suppose that Doña Luisa is still in San José."

"Yes, mother is in the city. She thinks she should stay with the children while they are there in school. Father and I are alone on the farm, and I am keeping house for him. Everyone was well when we last heard from them."

"But won't you come in and see our new house. I would like to show it to you."

"Just for a minute, Ursula," said Elvira. "If we don't hurry, we shall be drenched. We stupidly forgoy our raincoats."

They followed the young woman along the hard-trodden path between the stumps of the new clearing. Her cabin, better than some of the others along that road, was roofed with gleaming silvery sheets of the corrugated aluminium that had come into use since the war, and it had a floor of sawn boards. The walls were of broad boards, which had been planed smooth only for the front of the house and were untouched by paint. The front door led into the sala or parlor, a small square room furnished with a long, backless wooden bench, two little four-legged stools, and a rough table. Above the table hung a lithograph of the Crucifixion, depicting the Savior with tortured features and brightly bleeding wounds. It was mounted in an elaborately but crudely carved frame, and before it the stub of a candle was burning. Except this picture frame, no piece of the room's simple furnishings was stained or
painted; but Ursula had assured them all smooth and white with the sandpaper-like foliage of the chumico tree, a bundle of whose large, palmate leaves hung on the wall at the back of the house.

"Please be seated," requested Ursula, dusting off the spotless bench with her apron. "Would you like coffee or agua dulce? It will take only a minute to make. The water is already boiling."

"I would like agua dulce," said Elvira.

"The same for me, please," requested Edwin.

Ursula passed through the open door into the kitchen, which shared the front of the house with the parlor. Its principal furniture was the fogón, a large wooden platform or rimmed table filled with clay, into which were set two rows of stones for holding the cooking pots above the fire. The teakettle that now rested here was Elvira's wedding gift to the young couple. Ursula had covered the surface of the clay with a smooth white coat of ashes, and assured the exposed woodwork with the same indispensable chumico leaves. Above this fireplace, on a wooden rack suspended from the rafters, firewood was drying in the smoke that ascended from the fire and escaped beneath the eaves.

Ursula took a hard, round brick of solidified brown sugar from a wooden shelf attached to the back of the fogón. With an old machete that her husband had used on the farm and sharpened until only half of its original length remained, Ursula scraped the brick of sugar until she had a little pile of whitish shavings. Then, from a rack attached to the wall, she took two gilt-rimmed cups of white china — her very best — and divided the shavings
between them. Lifting the steaming teakettle from its place over the fire between the stones, she filled each cup with the hot water, then stirred with a spoon until the dulce dissolved. Next she took down a small basket from a shelf and removed a stack of tortillas from the singed banana leaves in which they had been wrapped. She laid them on her best china plate, placed a little heap of salt beside them, and served her guests, five minutes after they arrived.

While the agua dulce was cooling, each of the visitors took a tortilla, rubbed some salt on it, and began to eat. Hungry as they were from their ride, the freshly made disks of ground maize, still warm from the comal, tasted delicious.

"You always made good tortillas, Ursula," said Elvira.

"I saw you ride up the road and thought you might stop in on your way back, and I knew you would be hungry. Have another."

They needed no second invitation to eat more tortillas. From where they sat, they could look through an open door into a tiny cubicle, furnished with only a wooden chest and a plain wooden bedstead covered with a scarlet blanket, on which a baby lay sleeping.

"How are you and Manuel making out here?" asked Elvira, as she bit into her third tortilla.

"Not too badly. Our cow has just given us a calf, and our milpa yielded very well. Our coffee is growing well and should begin to bear after another year. Next month Manuel is going to sow a big field of beans. He works hard and does not drink —
thank God! —but it's difficult to make ends meet. Life was
easier when I worked for you. Sometimes I think I married too
young."

"It will be better when your coffee plantation begins to
yield," Edwin said to encourage her.

"Yes, I hope so. Will you stay here now, señor?"

"For a year. Then I must return to the United States and
study for another year."

"You must be very lonely, so far from your people," Ursula
remarked.

"One becomes accustomed to it. But I like it better here."

By the time the agua dulce was drunk, the few topics of
mutual interest were exhausted.

"Thank you very much, Ursula," said Elvira. "Your tortillas
have given us strength to ride home. You and Manuel must come to
see us one of these days. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Please give my greetings to your parents."

"Poor girl!" remarked Edwin as they rode off. "If she finds
life hard now, she will not find it easier after she has been
married ten years and has almost as many children. By that time,
much of the fertility will have been drained out of their new
land."

"But then the older children will be able to help their
parents, lifting part of the burden from their shoulders. We must
hurry, or we shall be caught by the rain."

The homeward-bound horses needed no urging to keep up a
good pace. On a level stretch of roadway they broke into a gallop,
and the riders did not pull them up until they approached a puddle that filled the roadway from side to side.

"How I love to gallop on a horse that needs no prodding, and seems to enjoy it as much as I do!" remarked Elvira, her face aglow with animation. "But riding is less fun when you want to go one way and your horse another way."

"Any clash of wills makes life less agreeable. A professor of mine used to say that if we could feel out the natural rhythms of things, and attune ourselves to them, we should live like gods, with no need to use coercion."

"That was well said."

"We are attuned and wish to go in the same direction, don't we, Elvira?"

"Certainly we do," she agreed.

The gathering clouds released their heavy burden of water ten minutes before the lovers reached the house at Selva Alegre, where they arrived thoroughly soaked. Violet lent Elvira a change of clothes, and she stayed for lunch. The downpour continuing into the afternoon, the Fernleys pressed Elvira to remain for the night, but she insisted on returning to Santa Teresa to see to her father's supper. If she did not soon arrive, he would be wondering what had happened to her. Edwin could not be dissuaded from escorting her to her door, although she protested that he was needlessly exposing himself to the weather. Protected by long raincoats with capes over the shoulders, they reached Santa Teresa with dry clothes.

As Edwin rode homeward alone, beside the swollen, roaring river, he knew, for the first time in his life, the delicious
experience of being wholly and unreservedly in love. Although
for a while he had imagined himself in love with Sylvia and
then with Bernice, he was sure now that he had never been.
He had been lonely, longing for someone to love, and he had
supposed that, if he knew them better, he might love them. But
he had been mistaken; he had never felt toward them anything
comparable to his present sentiments toward Elvira. This was
the real thing; the other had hardly even been its shadow.

To love anything wholly and without reservations, we must
deed it wholly perfect. And so it was with Edwin and Elvira.
In mind and in body, she seemed the most perfect example of
young womanhood that he had ever met. What grace of form!
What beauty of countenance! What expressive eyes! What warm
sympathy! What keen perception! What sound judgment! What
superb qualities of heart and of head! He could hardly imagine
a single detail in which he would have her otherwise than as
she was. He could hardly think a thought into which she did
not enter. He could form no picture of an endurable future
which did not include her as a central figure. Whether he closed
his eyes or kept them open, her sweet face smiled before him.
His tongue was always silently forming her name. The very
river beside him seemed to be shouting Elvira, Elvira as it
thundered toward the distant Pacific. With every atom of his
being, he yearned toward her.

Divine illusion of love, priceless gift of the celestial
Aphrodite to young hearts that are pure and loyal! The perfection
which it finds in its object is not absolute but relative
to the lover's needs and interests, which change with the years. All too soon the lover discovers, to his distress, that perfection belongs to no earthly being but exists, if anywhere, only in Plato's heaven of ideal forms. Then charity, which is forgiveness of failings rather than adoration of the good and the beautiful, must hasten to the support of love, lest it wither away along with its illusion of perfection.

The love which fills the heart that has mellowed with the years, broader and more stable if less intense than youth's delicious frenzy, extending perhaps to all things under the sun, is three-quarters charity: it overlooks all imperfections; it pitied creatures for their defects and shortcomings at the same time that it delights in whatever admirable qualities they might display. But in its first full efflorescence, Edwin's love for Elvira needed no support from charity. He loved her intensely just as she was, and only such love is perfect and unalloyed.

And, meanwhile, did Elvira feel the same toward him? The question never entered his mind, filled as it was with the immensity of his love for her. Why, then, should we, who look on from afar, doubt that she did?
Chapter 8
A TOOTHACHE

As the strength of the giant Antaeus was replenished by the touch of his mother the earth, so Edwin’s interest in botany was renewed by fresh contact with the profuse tropical flora. It was above all the beauty of vegetation, its inexhaustible wealth of forms and colors, which in boyhood had stirred his interest in the science once called amiable. But in his years in the botanical laboratory, he felt himself drifting ever farther away from the sources of his enthusiasm for plants. Here the emphasis was all on analysis and interpretation, the investigation of the structure of the smallest parts of vegetable cells and the discovery of their role in the functioning of the plant. Edwin was not insensitive of the interest and importance of this attempt to penetrate to the secret springs of life, yet he could hardly avoid the feeling that what was finally grasped, even in the most fertile of these laborious researches, was not life itself but a formula from which the vital principle had somehow escaped. Unlike some of his associates in the laboratory, Edwin loved beautiful forms better than dry formulas. If he could have forgotten his original motive for studying plants and permitted himself to be carried along by the latest fashion in research, he might have gone as far as any, for he did not lack ability. But that balance in the elements of his character to which his father had alluded, prevented the complete absorption in recondite studies which was indispensable for success. At times he had felt that his
love of nature's freshness and beauty had tricked him into
dusty halls of science from which freshness and beauty were
excluded as undesirable aliens, and he longed to escape.

After his return to the valley where he had learned to love
nature, Edwin saw old sights with new eyes. His years of study
had not been wasted, for they directed him to much that he had
overlooked. Now he found significance in forms and structures that
had been meaningless to him. While much that was formerly obscure
now seemed clear, he saw much that still demanded explanation;
and projects for research began to take shape in his mind. Presently he was wishing that he could return for a while to his
laboratory's well-stocked library, to look up certain points that
were stirring his interest, to check on what was already known
and what awaited discovery. He was troubled by the difficulty of
learning the names of the plants around him, for the *Flora of
Costa Rica* lacked keys, and the descriptions of species, especially
in the earlier volumes, were often inadequate. He would have
to dry specimens and send them to the big herbaria in the North
for identification --a slow and laborious process. But the naming
of plants was for him a means and not an end. His fondest hope,
cherished so secretly that he hesitated to divulge it even to those
closest to him, was to uncover some secret of tropical nature no
less novel and important than the discoveries which had brought
lustre to the names of Humboldt and Wallace, Bates and Bental,
Müller and Beccari. But such discoveries were now far more diffi-
cult to make than in the preceding century, when the naturalists
who explored the tropics were entering a scarcely trodden field.
On sunny mornings, Edwin roamed over the farm and the slopes above it, revisiting scenes of his boyhood, searching for plants and other natural productions that he could study. Frequently he used his pocket lens to examine the mosses and liverworts which at this wet season grew profusely on rocks, trunks, branches, and even the leaves of larger plants; the endless diversity of their delicate forms delighted him, and he was impatient for the arrival of his microscope, so that he could view them more adequately. On these excursions he was sometimes accompanied by his father, Elvira or Violet, and he did his best to explain to them whatever of interest they saw. Lacking his training, they could not always follow his explanations; but they were delighted by his accounts of the fungus gardens of the leaf-cutting ants; the role of insects and hummingbirds in the pollination of flowers; the varied contrivances for the dispersal of seeds; and the special advantages which the spindly ceceopis trees offered to the myriad tiny ants that inhabited its hollow stems, ate the pearly corpuscles on the furry bases of its long leaf-stalks that seemed to be provided especially for them, and perhaps protected the tree from its enemies.

In the afternoons, when rain often came down in torrents, Edwin read, examined the plants he had gathered in the morning, or worked in the carpentry shed. Needing a cabinet for his botanical equipment and the plants he was collecting, he set about to make it for himself. It had to be tight to keep out the cockroaches and other insects, and he proceeded with great care, using
boards which his father had long ago spread out on the rafters to season.

Now was the time for planting beans, and Edwin volunteered to take charge of the work. The beans were broadcast in a field covered with a lush growth of young trees, bushes and vines, which formed a thicket that was more than head-high and so dense that a man could hardly force his way through it. After the beans had been scattered through this standing vegetation, it was slashed down with long machetes and chopped up to form a mulch, through which the seedlings grew. Broadcasting the beans by hand required a special knack, for they promptly fell out of sight in the rank growth, and it was impossible to see what one had done. Edwin tried his hand at it, rather diffidently, for one accustomed to work by rule and measure is particularly distressed by the absence of such guides. A fortnight later, when the beans were sprouting up through the drying vegetation that covered the ground, it became evident that Edwin's were too thickly sown in some places, in others too sparse. They were much less uniformly spread than those that had been broadcast by Amado, who had a friendly laugh at him.

One day when Edwin returned from the forest, he found Lalo, Amado's younger brother, sitting on the back porch and cracking his knuckles by pressing the flexed fingers of his left hand with the palm of his right. This skeletal sound, which the country people often kept up when nervous or bored, distressed Edwin, and to stop it he requested the boy to show him his hands. Lalo held them out, palms upward.
"No, I want to see the backs of your hands," said Edwin. Lalo turned his hands over, wondering what Don Edwin wanted. Edwin examined them carefully.

"You are right-handed," he announced after an interval.

"Yes, sir. How did you know? My brother Amado is left-handed."

"I can tell that you are right-handed because there are large scars on your left hand and scarcely any on your right.

Once you tried to slice off the end of your thumb with your machete, leaving a big scar; and there are smaller scars on your middle finger, the back of your hand, and your wrist. Your right hand, which did all this, is very naughty, so to mistreat its innocent brother that has never done it any harm."

"Well," replied Lalo, "my right hand does nearly all the hard work, and without it my left hand might starve to death. Perhaps the right hand gets angry with the left hand for not doing its share of the work, and tries to punish its lazy brother when I'm not paying enough attention to what it is about."

"Yes, that's very likely," Edwin agreed, "but you should watch your right hand more carefully and not allow it to vent its spite on its weaker brother. Sometimes, you know, it needs its brother's help."

At this point, Mrs. Fernley arrived and told Lalo to open his mouth widely. While he did so, she took a tweezers and filled a hollow molar with a little wad of cotton soaked in oil
of cloves. Of late, Lalo had been troubled much by toothache, and Edwin, who liked the boy, was distressed by his suffering. That evening, when the family was gathered at the supper table, he asked whether they could send him to the dentist and have his teeth filled. He offered to pay part of the expense with money he had earned by tutoring in Spanish while in the North, of which there was still a little left.

"I think we might help him with his teeth," said Mrs. Fernley, "but not to have them filled. What he needs is a complete set of false teeth."

"But Mother," Edwin protested, "I looked into his mouth while you were curing his toothache, and he seems to have many sound teeth. It would be a pity to pull them out. At sixteen, he is very young to have false teeth."

"You should view the matter more realistically, Edwin," said his mother. "In the present state of his mouth, it would probably cost more to have his teeth put in good order, with the kind of dental work you are accustomed to, than to give him false teeth. And even if his teeth were fixed up, he would not be able to take proper care of them. Few of the people hereabout can afford the expense of toothbrushes and paste, much less the cost of a filling, a crown, or a bridge. The hot agua dulce they are always sipping seems to dissolve their teeth. I have noticed that with them the front teeth nearly always decay first, while with us the back molars are soonest in need of repair. Because they cannot afford to take care of their teeth, they like to replace them with a
denture, which will last for many years without further expense. Some of them, especially a favorite child of one of the more prosperous landowners, may get false teeth long before the age of sixteen. Lalo told me that he wants to have his teeth pulled out, so that he can get pretty ones, with plenty of gold stuck in front where it will show."

"That's all quite true, but it doesn't seem right to me," persisted Edwin. "It's so unnatural for a boy of his age to have false teeth."

"How much would a set for him cost?" asked Mr. Fernley.

"A good set costs about a hundred and twenty-five colones in Ureña, but the gold trimmings would be additional," answered his wife.

"The farm could help with fifty colones," said Mr. Fernley. "Lalo is earning now, and I think he should pay part of the expense. He will value his denture more, and take better care of it, if he has helped to pay for it. Let us say that he contributes thirty colones, and as much more as he wishes to pay for the gold inlays which will make them more obviously artificial. That will leave forty-five colones to be made up."

"I haven't much money, but I'll contribute five colones from the birthday present that Grandmother gave me," said Violet.

"I would like to help, but I have only what I am given, and I am 'peeled' now, as the people say," declared Harold.

"I'll contribute twenty colones, but I would help more willingly if we were not going to have the poor boy's teeth pulled out," said Edwin.
"That leaves twenty colones to be made up," Mr. Fernley said, mentally adding up the contributions. "Doubtless Beto will help his son to that extent, although he hasn't much to spare at the week's end. Edwin's contribution is the more generous because the project goes against his grain. He has a passion for wholeness - for wholeness and purity — and a young boy without his natural teeth is not quite whole."

A passion for wholeness and purity! William Fernley could often express his son's sentiments more clearly and concisely than Edwin himself could; and when the latter thought over these words that his father had dropped so casually, as it seemed, he realized that they were an exact statement of his attitude to life. He desired passionately to be whole, to fulfill every side of his nature as he conceived it. If in this estimate of his nature the intellectual side loomed large — he was intensely eager to know and understand — the emotional and physical sides were not neglected. He had a capacity for love — perhaps more for intellectual love, to use Spinoza's term, than for the passionate variety — a capacity far too large to be filled by any single object. To become a husband and a father seemed necessary for the completion of his life. Although he had no ambition to excel in athletics, he tried to keep himself strong and fit. Along with this burning desire to fulfill every side of his nature, was a horror of everything that did not seem to comport with this nature, of excesses and indulgences emotional or physical which seemed to pollute or degrade him in spirit or body. This, he supposed, was what his father meant by a passion for purity.
Some would say that Edwin had too exalted a concept of his nature, of human nature in general. He had managed to go through college without serious exposure to either the older theological or the newer psychoanalytic views of man's depravity or baseness. Although he could hardly have avoided knowing, from reading and hearsay, something of the seamier side of life, he had contrived to escape intimate contact with it, as though instinctively recognizing his need to preserve himself from experiences that would be profoundly disturbing. In spite of his biological studies, he could still believe that he had come into this world "trailing clouds of glory," if not from a personal God (whose existence he found hard to reconcile with all the suffering in the world), at least from some impersonal source that might be regarded as divine. His respect for his father and mother made it easier for him to hold this Wordsworthian view with regard to his brother and sister and himself, and all those others whose parents seemed really to have desired them and to have lovingly welcomed their advent on this earth. As to those unfortunates who were flung into the world by accident and hostilely received, he was not so certain that they had arrived "trailing clouds of glory." At least, the clouds seemed to have been sullied close to their source. This was a baffling problem which he had not yet thought through to a conclusion.
Chapter 9

A LETTER

At Selva Alegre the arrival of the mail, which was seldom brought more than once a week from the post office eight miles away, was an eagerly awaited event. One day toward the end of October, Harold rode to Ureña to do some shopping and bring the mail. When he returned early in the afternoon, the family gathered around him on the porch to see what his saddlebags contained.

Eugene Rivers:

"Edwin, here's a letter from Gene," said Violet, who was distributing the mail.

Edwin dropped into a chair, opened the envelope, and read. When he came to the end of the letter, he looked up with an expression which his mother, who was sensitive to her children's moods, did not fail to notice.

"Unwelcome news, Edwin?" she asked.

"Rather disappointing. Gene will not be able to come next year."

"Why not?" asked Violet.

"It's a somewhat involved story, and the best would be to read what he says:

"Dear Edwin,

"I'm back again in my old lodgings at Mrs. Schmidt's. In the next room is a budding chemist from Minnesota named Nielsen, a pleasant young chap. Our friend Holmes did not return this year, having gone to Yale to finish his studies...."
"This gossip about people you don't know will hardly interest you. I'll skip it and come to the part that concerns us.

Professor Bennett has ruined my project for studying birds first on your farm next year. He insists that I collect them, since, to be sure that they are correctly identified from specimens. Since as you know, I hate to shoot birds, I consulted an authority on the birds of your region, to learn how necessary or desirable it might be to take specimens of them, when my main interest is in their habits. He told me that the Costa Rican avifauna has already been so thoroughly collected that it is unlikely that any species remain to be discovered. Our knowledge of the habits of these birds, however, is scanty; and I could make an important contribution to ornithology by studying one or a few kinds thoroughly. He said that, with the experience I already have, I should have no difficulty identifying the great majority of the birds that I would see, if I go about it the right way, which he explained to me. I could choose for detailed study species of whose identity there would be no doubt.

"When I reported this to Bennett, he did not refute it, but simply said that if I wished to use work in the tropics as the basis for my doctoral dissertation in his department, I must collect. Doubtless he has an ulterior motive for this, as he is eager to build up his department's collection of tropical birds. When I hinted that I might change to another university, he said that I had better make sure in advance that they would give me a degree without some collecting. And, of course, I am far from sure. Few people up here feel as we do about taking life. Everywhere it is kill, kill, kill, on one pretext or another, or for no reason
at all. In the zoology departments there is a great demand for specimens, despite the large numbers they have already accumulated; but my only desire is to study living birds.

"As you can see, I'm in a quandary. I am sure that you would not wish me to shoot birds while living with you. Bennett, who has been to Honduras, has offered to find me a place to stay there, instead of in Costa Rica. I know nobody in the whole country, and I understand that the avifauna there is not so rich as where you are. I suppose that it is a question of doing some collecting or else abandoning my intention to take a degree in ornithology, which I can ill afford to do, after having already devoted two years to it. You know how hard it is to get a good job without first sticking a label on oneself.

"This was a hard letter to write, after all the plans we made together. I wonder when we shall see each other again.

"With kind remembrances to all your family,

"As ever,

"[Signature]"

"He sounds as though he would like you to tell him that it's all right, come anyway," remarked Mrs. Fernley.

"I'm sure he would, but I can't," said Edwin. "I'm most disappointed in Eugene Rivers. We talked much about this matter. We were both distressed about all the killing, all the cruel experiments, done in the name of science, which is becoming more and more an insatiable Moloch, demanding ever more victims for its reeking altars. We agreed that an immense amount can still be learned without killing or torturing animals, and that we should
learn what we can with this limitation. Now he seems to be yielding to the pressure they are putting on him. I'm very sorry."

"I'm sure they could not make you abandon your principles," Violet remarked.

"I hope not," declared Edwin.

"Your position is stronger than Gene's," said Mr. Fernley. "You belong, in a modest way, to the landed gentry. You needn't take a degree or a job except on your own terms, because without them you can live fairly well here. Gene, who I understand is without an independent income, must find a job or starve. I do not condone his forsaking his principles, but we must make allowances for his difficult position."

"If I were in his place," Edwin said, "I would try a little harder to find a professor of ornithology who would give me a degree without collecting, and if unsuccessful, I would turn to botany, or physics, or history, or what not, and take my degree in that."

"That would be best," agreed Mr. Fernley, "but he is less versatile than you are."

"You won't tell him to come, then?" asked Harold. "He's a good fellow."

"Would the rest of you wish to have him here shooting our birds and bringing them here to the house to skin?" Edwin queried.

"Of course not!" said Mrs. Fernley.

"That would be horrible!" exclaimed Violet.

"No, we couldn't permit that," declared Mr. Fernley.

"I'm not so squeamish, I shouldn't mind," asserted Harold.
"I shall write to Gene, reminding him of the good resolutions he once made and all the talks we had together," said Edwin. "Perhaps I can strengthen his moral backbone. I'll bet that if he came here and made a first-class study of the habits of one of our birds, he could get some professor to accept it for his dissertation, collecting or no collecting."

All agreed that this would be the best course to follow. Harold said that if the letter were promptly written, he could send it to the post office early next morning, with a neighbor who happened to be going to the village.

Edwin took a walk in the forest to put his thoughts in order. Then he returned to his room and wrote his friend the strongest, most persuasive letter that he could compose, urging him to remain true to his convictions at any cost. Edwin made so many corrections on the first draft that he was obliged to copy it over. The letter was sent by airmail early on the following morning, and he eagerly awaited the reply.

A fortnight later, the answer came. Eugene said that he now saw that his scruples about collecting birds would stand in the way of his advancement as an ornithologist, and he must accordingly relax them, although he expected that he would never collect many. After all, he argued, the whole classification of birds was based upon collected specimens; no one who worked seriously in the science could avoid using that classification; and in doing so, he tacitly acquiesced in the collecting which made it possible. Besides, without financial support from his department, he could not go to the tropics. The best would be for him to go to Mon-
duras, as Professor Bennett wished him to do.

"That's a sophistical argument about the classification," said Edwin, after reading Eugene's letter. "Many of the things we value, such as our independence and our civil liberties, were not won without violence and bloodshed; yet it would be folly, serving no useful purpose, to relinquish these benefits, because we disapprove of some of the historical events which gave them to us and could never acquiesce in their repetition. Such a course would only lead to more and perhaps greater violence. Similarly, the birds have all been classified, sufficiently well for all practical purposes, I understand. Hence it is wrong to slaughter more of them, no matter what judgment we pass on the collecting that has already been done. And it seems especially wrong for Gene to do so, when his chief interest is to learn how they live."

"Will you write and tell him that?" Violet asked.

"No, it seems futile to continue the argument. I reminded him of all the principal points in my last letter. He has had a change of heart, and we won't convince him through his head."

"I had hoped that he would help us to learn the names of our birds," said Mrs. Fernley. "It's so hard to know them here, where there are so many kinds and we lack a convenient illustrated guide, such as they now have for the United States and Europe."

"I also hoped that Gene would help us with that, Mother, but we'll get along without him," Edwin said. "There is a catalogue of all the birds of the North American continent and the West Indies, published by the Smithsonian Institution in ten thick volumes, with detailed technical descriptions of every species
but no pictures of the birds. When I have some money, I'll send for that and learn to use it. Doubtless I'll make mistakes at first, but with time I'll correct them."

"I have no doubt you will succeed if you set your mind to it," remarked his father. "You will not be deprived of the knowledge you desire, but you will not have your friend."

"He was my closest friend through all my years at the university, but I suppose we'll drift apart now," Edwin mused gloomily. "He was such a nice boy. I'm sorry to see him go astray," said Mrs. Fernley.

Violet looked disappointed but remained silent.

"I've an idea," said Harold after an interval, "but I don't know whether I should tell it, because you might all jump on me."

"We do not promise to agree, but we promise not to jump on you," Mr. Fernley assured him.

"The idea is that we find a place for Gene to stay somewhere in the valley, where he can collect his birds without shooting ours on this farm. Then, when he has finished that part of his work, he can come here to study their habits. I believe that I could arrange for him to stay with Don Chico Rodríguez or Don Félix Calvo. They have fairly large houses and probably would not charge much for board and lodging."

"That would be aiding him to pursue a course which we hold to be wrong," Edwin protested.

"But if he goes to Honduras, he will probably kill as many birds as he would collect here, maybe more. We can't protect all
the birds in the world," said Harold.

"He wouldn't be as comfortable with the Calvos or the Rodríguez as with us," Mrs. Fernley pointed out.

"I suppose that collectors and explorers and people like that must learn to rough it," Harold said. "They can hardly expect to sleep on a soft bed between spotless white sheets every night."

"We should also bear in mind that what Gene needs is the moral support that Edwin gave him when they were together," said Mr. Fernley. "I suppose that now he has nobody close at hand who shares his former views about killing for scientific purposes. Only exceptional people are strong enough to stand in moral isolation. Physical courage is, in my experience, far less rare than moral courage."

"You mean that if Gene were here with us, we could reconvert him, so to speak?" asked Violet.

"That's a possibility, not a certainty," replied Mr. Fernley.

"What do you think we should do, then, Father?" Edwin asked.

"I think that the decision properly rests with you, who are his friend. We have advanced such arguments, pro and con, as have occurred to us, and possibly we shall think of others later. Probably you should digest them for a few days, before you decide."

For a week, Edwin pondered the perplexing problem, which even kept him awake at night, although usually he slept soundly.
He discussed the matter at length with Elvira, who reminded him of the far-reaching consequences which Eugene's eventual attitude might have. Some day, she said, he would probably have students of his own, to whom he would doubtless transmit his compassionate or callous attitude toward the animals they studied. So much would be gained by recalling him to his lost ideal, that Elvira thought he should be permitted to come, even at the risk of their failure to "re-convert" him. Encouraged by Elvira's moral support, but not without misgivings, Edwin at last wrote, proposing Harold's plan to Eugene.

Rivers eagerly accepted the proposal.
Chapter 10
THE BETROTHAL

The year was approaching its end. The rain which still fell almost every afternoon was seldom so hard and prolonged as it had been from September to November, and the dwindling current of the Aguas Claras River roared less loudly. The gnarled, spreading sotocaballo trees which grew along its banks had densely covered their leafy twigs with pink stamens, whose heavy, polleny odor was wafted by the breeze to the house. The poró trees in the garden were dropping their foliage, the better to display their clusters of long scarlet flowers, beloved of the long-billed star-throat hummingbirds. The golden-spray orchids, that had been attached to the trees around the house, were sending forth vine-like branches several yards long, which would soon burst into a cascade of bright yellow blossoms. In the thickets and scrubby pastures, a variety of shrubs and vines of the composite family displayed masses of white, purple or yellow florets to the sunnier skies. The vegetable world was arraying itself in its loveliest attire to greet the coming dry season. But with the notable exception of the hummingbirds, who now revelled in profuse nectar and tirelessly repeated their weak, monotonous songs, the feathered world remained silent, as though in sullen anticipation of the lean days which increasing drought would bring.

Edwin's chest of equipment had arrived, and he was now busy with his research; but he often found it difficult to keep his
eye applied to his microscope when the balmy air, brilliant
sky and smiling earth were persistently beckoning him to come
and enjoy nature rather than try to analyze and understand her.
Sometimes the invitation proved irresistible, and he put aside
his work to wander about the farm. Often he took the riverside
road which led down to Santa Teresita, where he found Elvira, who
joined him on a walk, or sat with him on the cool veranda, while
they spoke earnestly of things whose importance only they could
appreciate.

With the advent of drier weather, the Fernleys resumed their
practice of swimming on Sundays, in the pool deeply shaded by the
fern-draped boughs that the sotacaballo trees flung across it.
Refreshed by the invigorating chill which the hurrying waters
had brought down from heights where frost and icicles now formed
on starry nights, they sat on the streamside rocks to eat the
picnic lunch which Hazel and Violet had prepared. Usually Elvira
joined the five Fernleys on these outings, and they seemed to be
back again in the old days before Edwin went away for his long
years of study. And if the sweet, carefree days of childhood
could never be relived, there were new interests and attractions
to compensate for their passing.

Ever since their ride up into the mountains soon after
Edwin's return, he and Elvira knew that they would marry, although
a formal proposal had not been made and accepted. Edwin felt that
such a proposal was either superfluous or wrong. If a young man
and woman were sufficiently attuned to marry, they should be in-
tuitively aware of this, and the proposal would be superfluous.
If they lacked this accord and the consequent intuition, they were
not ready for marriage, and the proposal would be premature. Although Edwin had never asked Elvira whether she would be his wife, she was not surprised by the question which he suddenly addressed to her, one afternoon in mid-December, while they sat together on the flat top of a huge rock, whose sides were overgrown with ferns and tall, glossy-leaved begonias, above the river which glided beneath their dangling feet:

"When shall we be married, Elvira?"

"Whenever you say, Edwin. But I think it should be this dry season," replied Elvira, who wore a spray of pink-and-white begonia flowers that Edwin had playfully stuck in her dark tresses.

"Yes, it should certainly be before the rains return, perhaps in February, when your mother comes down with your sisters."

As they planned their life together, their thoughts hurried into the future as merrily as the clear stream that hurried seaward beneath their feet. Until September, they would live at Selva Alegre or, perhaps better, at San Teresa, where the big house was much of the time half empty, while Edwin worked hard at his research. Then they would go north and take a small and modest apartment, while he finished his work for his degree, which he hoped could be done by the following June. To meet expenses, Edwin would apply for a renewal of his scholarship, and Elvira would give lessons in Spanish. She would have to do all the housework, as servants were beyond their means, and she wished also to take some courses at the university: botany, so she could understand her husband's work, child-care, and perhaps also ornithology.
She would be very busy. After taking his degree, Edwin would apply for a research fellowship or, failing that, a position with the department of agriculture, so that they could see a little more of the world, and have a wider experience, before they settled down on the plantation, where they hoped to raise their children and dwell happily together for many years.

As often happens, the distant future seemed less perplexing, more easily shaped to conform to the ideal, than the near future. They did not have enough money for Elvira's fare to the States and the few furnishings they would need to start housekeeping. Mr. Fernley would pay Edwin's fare, and perhaps help with the other expenses; but it would be unfair to expect him to defray all of them.

"Maybe Father will help," Elvira suggested. "His crops were good this year, and whenever that happens he is generous. Anyway, you must ask him whether I can marry you. We are rather old-fashioned about that in this country, as you know."

"Yes, let's go now, as it is getting late. I suppose he will be at the house."

They found Don Mariano resting on the porch. Elvira entered the house, deeming it more proper to leave the men to confer alone. At Don Mariano's invitation, Edwin took a chair beside him, more nervous than when, an hour before, he had asked Elvira when they would be wedded. That question was such a natural development of their long and deepening intimacy that it cost no more effort than the opening of a full-grown flower bud. Now he must break new ground.
"Don Mariano, Elvira and I wish to marry, if you have no objection," he said at last.

"So I supposed. Elvira has the choice of a wealthier husband, but I do not know where she would find one more likely to be kind and faithful to her. I have known your family since you were a little boy, and I give you my daughter with confidence that you will treat her well. I believe that her mother will be satisfied with her choice. When do you wish to marry?"

"We thought in February, when Doña Luiza comes down with the girls."

Don Mariano agreed.

"That seems a good time. You have no objection to being married by the padre, I suppose, although you are not a Catholic."

"I am not averse to having the Church sanctify our union. It may help, it cannot harm."

"You know, no doubt, that the priest will demand that you formally agree to bring up in the Catholic faith any children who may bless your marriage. Otherwise, he cannot perform the ceremony."

said Edwin.

"I was not aware of that. I have known several instances of Protestants marrying Jews. In one case the ceremony was performed by a pastor and in another by a rabbi, and in neither case was either party obliged to change his religion, or make any committment regarding the unborn children. All that the bride and bridegroom had to promise was to be good and faithful spouses, which is the minimum that any religion would require. Are you sure that we would have to make that promise regarding our children?"
"Yes, I am quite certain. Only last year, the daughter of one of my friends was married to a Protestant by a priest, and he was forced to give just that promise—with considerable reluctance, I believe."

"I can understand that," said Edwin. "I must take a while to think it over. It is not a promise to be lightly made."

"Yes, by all means, think it over. There's no need to be hasty. But remember that if you have any sons, and they live in this country, as I hope they will, it will be to their advantage to be Catholics."

"How is that, Don Mariano?"

"Well, this is a Catholic country, and, as you know, many men of the more comfortable classes have political ambitions. You might almost say that politics is the national pastime, as cricket or baseball is in Anglo-Saxon countries. You can readily see how helpful it would be for a candidate for public office to profess the religion of the majority. Then, too, you must consider Elvira's mother, who would strenuously object to her daughter's marrying outside the Church, which does not recognize as valid a marriage ceremony not performed by its own clergy; so that, on the official view, a Catholic who has been married civilly or by the minister of some other religion is 'living in sin.' Elvira herself has, I know, more liberal views on these matters, because she has been so much with people of other faiths. But I am sure that she would not wish to displease her parents."

"Thank you, Don Mariano," said Edwin, rising from his chair.
"The sun is setting and I must hurry home, so as not to be caught by the darkness, as the moon will not rise until late. I shall think over the matter of the priest and let you know as soon as I reach a decision. Until tomorrow!"

"Until tomorrow, my son!"

As he passed through the garden, Edwin found Elvira awaiting him, eager to know the outcome of the interview with her father. In a few words, he told her what had passed.

"I knew that he would welcome you as a son-in-law. He has great respect for all your family. I'm so happy that everything is settled."

Edwin pressed her hand and promised to see her in the morning. He turned up the riverside road, walking with great swinging strides, while the vanishing sun set all the western sky aglow, his thoughts as rosy as the clouds. He had been greatly disappointed by his friend's apostasy, and he still viewed Eugene River's forthcoming visit with misgivings. But in this case, at least, everything was going according to his desires. Elvira herself had said that everything was settled. But was it? He did not like this business of the priest. To force him to bring up his children in a religion not his own, seemed a monstrous infringement of freedom of thought. As a man's mind matures, his views on religion may change, and he should be free to teach his children what he himself believes. The farther he went, the slower and more pensive his steps became. It was nearly dark when he reached home.

Edwin was glad to find Violet sitting on the front porch in
the gloaming. She could not see his self-conscious expression as he announced that he and Elvira had decided to marry.

"I'm so glad!" she exclaimed in a voice that showed she meant it. "May I tell the others?"

"Please do," he said, relieved to have found a herald to break the news for him.

Leaving a kiss on his hot cheek, she hurried about the house telling everyone. Soon they were crowding around him with warm congratulations.

Until well past their usual hour for retiring, the Fernleys sat in the library discussing Edwin's plans. Although William promised to help with the expenses, he was not certain that he could meet all of them. Don Kariano would help, too, he thought. The chief topic of discussion was whether Edwin should consent to be married by the priest. This in itself did not displease them; to be wedded according to the rites of the faith which Elvira's ancestors had for countless generations professed, would be a graceful compliment to her family, if nothing more. But the stipulation about the children's religion was disapproved by all the Fernleys. When at last they separated for the night, Mr. Fernley said to his son:

"You know our views, but you certainly need not be bound by them. The decision affects your life; you must make it for yourself."

Edwin went to bed, but he was too excited to sleep. Everything in his and Elvira's future looked bright, except this troublesome business of the wedding ceremony. The more he
thought of it, the more it reminded him of the swollen stream which, long ago when he was a boy, had separated him from his home. What would happen if he refused to be married by the priest? What difficulties would Elvira's parents put in the way of their union? Would Elvira herself consent to go against her parents' wishes and be married in some other fashion, as by the State instead of by the Church? He felt certain that, left to herself, Elvira would not object to unite herself to him by any legally binding rite; but he knew that she was strongly attached to her family, and he was far from sure whether she would defy their wishes. Harassed by these doubts, he did not sleep until past midnight.
Chapter 11

DISAGREEMENT

When Edwin awoke at sunrise, his mind was made up. After breakfast, he saddled Callip and rode up the valley, to test last night's decision in the morning light, before divulging it to those whom it chiefly concerned. When a mile's trotting along the road had not shaken his thoughts into another order, he turned his horse's head around and rode straight to Santa Teresa. Elvira was expecting him, and her lovely, trusting smile of greeting almost dissolved his resolution. He hated to raise difficulties so soon after their betrothal.

Edwin suggested that they stroll through the plantation, where they could talk without interruption. He began by telling her how delighted everyone was that she would become a permanent member of a family to which she already seemed to belong. Elvira said that she had written the good news to her mother. She added:

"I think Mother will be pleased. I know that she was encouraging Rafael, not because she likes and respects him more than you, but because his family is so rich and prominent. But I would rather have you with nothing than him with a million."

"Remember what the poet said:

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust.

But I don't anticipate that we shall be reduced to that extreme for some time to come."

They were walking along a lightly shaded path between the glossy-leaved coffee bushes, from which the berries had all been
gathered.

"Where do you think we should be married?" asked Elvira.

"In the little chapel in Aguas Claras, or in the church in Ureña, or at home? I think it would be nicest at home, don't you? I believe that the padre would perform the ceremony at home, if he were paid enough."

"Elvira, we cannot be married by the padre."

"Why not?" she asked, surprised.

"Because of the agreement we would have to make with regard to our children's religion. We cannot barter their spiritual life for the priest's blessing. It's not worth that much. Even if the sacrament of the Church would ensure that our marriage would avoid all the difficulties into which so many run — which, of course, it will not — we could not buy it at that price. It would not be fair to the children, if we have any."

"But I was raised as a Catholic."

"I know that," replied Edwin. "But you do not believe all the Church's teachings as implicitly as the women of your mother's generation commonly did, and as you continue to read and think, you may believe them still less. We must be free to teach our children what we ourselves believe, in the light of the most trustworthy modern information about the world, not bound to strengthen their faith in some ancient dogma. My father has had such a beneficent influence on our lives because he never taught his children anything he did not himself hold to be true, and when he was in doubt about some important question, he never hesitated to admit it. This is the course that we must pursue with our own children."
"I know that your family attaches great importance to right conduct --more than most people --but I did not suppose that you took religion very seriously. You belong to no church, I believe."

"That is the side of our family about which you know least," Edwin said. "Since you were being brought up as a Catholic, Father told us long ago that we should not discuss religion when you were present, so as not to confuse you. But now that you and I are going to marry, we should understand each other. If our family does not belong to any church, it is just because we do take religion so seriously that we cannot pay lip service to dogmas we do not believe, as many people do. Father taught us that religion is a serious attitude toward the whole of life, and its dedication to something greater than ourselves. Hence a religion is a necessity for everybody, but it is most difficult to find a satisfactory one. To the thoughtful man, the popular religions, with their wild assumptions and unprovable claims, underscore the tragedy of our human situation."

"Why is that?" asked Elvira.

"Because religious teachings, however true they seemed when they came straight from the lips of an inspired seer, when incorporated into an established religion inevitably harden into dogmas, which with the passage of time become inconsistent with our scientific understanding of the world, so that we are confused. Because, too, we are not satisfied with the ethics of any of the established religions. That of Christianity, for example, is too narrowly circumscribed around mankind, when it should guide and mitigate our treatment of all creatures. The morality of oriental religions, such as Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism, is broader,
inculcating harmlessness to all beings; but their prevailing narrow asceticism does not do justice to our capacities for many-sided growth. Buddhism contains a lurking inconsistency, for while regarding even the simplest form of life as too precious to be destroyed, it teaches that even its highest form has too little value to be desirable; so that instead of welcoming life, and living it fully, we should bend all our strength to escape from finite existence. I believe that we should try to develop every side of our nature, making our lives as rich and full as we can, but with constant regard for the similar tendency of every organized being to perfect itself according to its kind."

"I have always admired the way your family tries to live without harming any creature," Elvira said, "and following your example, I have long striven to do the same, as far as I can; although I realize that to obey this rule without exceptions is impossible, especially on a farm, where one must protect the crops against the ravages of insects and other animals. We already see eye to eye on this matter. But in addition, I think we could agree to teach our children to love and believe in Jesus."

"Certainly!" Edwin agreed. "One of the things I most admire about Jesus is his ability to proclaim moral truths in words that penetrate straight into the mind and stick there. When I took a course in comparative religion, I learned that many of his characteristic doctrines were not as original as they are often held to be, but were foreshadowed in the post-Biblical religious writings of the Jews. Be that as it may, we must admit that, if the Gospels
give us an accurate report of what Jesus actually said, he could say things more strikingly and vividly than anyone else. He was a great poet. But our admiration of Jesus should not make us underrate teachers like the Buddha, Mahavira, Lao-tse, Socrates, Plato, or Epictetus, all of whom had important messages for mankind."

"But I always thought that Jesus was far greater than all the rest, because of his divinity," said Elvira. 

admired him greatly

"I fell in love with him when, as a boy, I read his Life by an attractive Renan. What a beautiful picture the French writer paints of the gentle, inspired young man, teaching his doctrines in the quiet countryside! But Renan denied the divinity of Christ and lost his professorship in the Collège de France for his heretical views. The orthodox account of Jesus troubles me in many ways. If I must think of him as an incarnate God, I admire him less rather than more than if I may view him as simply a man -- a man of genius."

"I don't follow."

"Well, as a man he was outstanding; but he was certainly not all that I should expect a God to be. Take the matter of the which so embarrassed his biographer, Renan.
miracles, if he could, as is reported, effect miraculous cures and the like, why did he not travel far and wide through the world, alleviating its misery? There was certainly enough of it in the Augustan age, as there is now. I should expect a God who trod the earth to bring immediately great and widespread improvements, not to confine his benefactions to a few peasants around the Lake of Galilee. He was even reluctant to heal the daughter of the
Canaanite woman, because she was not a Jew."

"Maybe he did no more for men because they were so wicked," Elvira suggested.

"That there is an appalling amount of evil in the world, I am the last to deny. But I believe that men's wickedness is the necessary, the inevitable, consequence of the manner in which they and the other animals originated; and this whether one adopts the Biblical account of creation or the evolutionary view. Since man is not, on any view, self-created, his weaknesses and perversions must, in the final analysis, be attributed to the mistakes, or the miscarriages, of his creator, whether we call this creator 'God' or 'Evolution.' And these faults in the creature are just what I should expect, a God who walked the earth would hasten to rectify on a worldwide scale, making men less wicked."

"For my part," said Elvira, "I think the evidence in favor of evolution is too strong for any rational person to doubt it. If we take the account of creation in Genesis seriously, we must regard it as allegorical. What else troubles you in the orthodox account of Christ?"

"Most of all, the Crucifixion. Anyone who takes that seriously, and sees its implications, must have a very poor opinion of God the Father. Indeed, it might make him hate God."

"How is that?" Elvira asked. "We are taught that God was most magnanimous in giving his only Son to be sacrificed to save wayward man."

"Look at it this way," continued Edwin. "Imagine yourself
back in the old days, when a plantation was worked by slaves, over whose lives the owner exercised arbitrary power. The slaves on my father's farm have been so lazy and disorderly that, in an access of wrath, he promises to flog every one of them until the blood spurts forth. I go to my father and plead for them, adducing their ignorance, their hard lives devoid of hope, as excuses for their misconduct. Father reflects a moment, then says: 'All right, Edwin, if you love those rascals enough to be flogged to death for their sakes, I'll let them off this time.' What would you think of my father if he did this?"

"That he was cruel and vindictive, incapable of magnanimity."

"Now, instead of me, think of Jesus; and instead of my father, the Father in heaven. What conclusion must you draw with regard to the latter?"

They had paused in their walk while engaged in this earnest conversation, and Elvira stood for a minute looking earthward, in deep reflection. At last she fixed her brown eyes on him.

"Oh, Edwin!" she replied, "I should think it blasphemous to say. Perhaps your analogy is not exact."

"No, it is not. My father did not make his slaves; he bought them with all their imperfections, which he could not change. But according to the official doctrine, the Father in heaven had created man, and being omnipotent, he might have made us better than we are, giving us sufficient wisdom and self-control to make good use of our free will, if we actually have it. This only makes his vindictiveness seem worse. Tell me where else my analogy is at fault."
She reflected a while. "Just now, I cannot. I must think it over. What you have been saying is all so different from what I have been taught that it upsets me. I must take time to digest it."

"Certainly, Elvira. These things must be thought over calmly and at leisure. I did not intend to upset you. But it seemed necessary to point out some of the reasons why I cannot consent to have our children brought up in a religion which I could not explain to them without embarrassment."

"You take your prospective parenthood very seriously, Edwin."

"I hope so. To start a new life and set it on the right course is the most serious business in the world. And until everybody, or nearly everybody, takes it seriously, the world will remain the horrible mess that it now is."

"And next to that, you take religion seriously," she said.

"I shouldn't put it just that way. Rather I should say that religion and parenthood are so intimately connected that you cannot take one seriously without taking the other seriously — especially if you recall my father's definition of religion."

"But what are we to do, Edwin? Surely you do not wish me to break with my parents. They have been very good to me, and I love them. Moreover, it is important that our families remain on friendly terms, here where we have no relations and are so different from everybody else. And we need my father's help. He said that he would give us my fare to the States as a wedding present, if we marry as he wishes."

"Certainly, we must try to avoid a rupture with your family. But we must likewise resist ecclesiastical intolerance and tyranny.\"
I should think that a minister of any religion would marry a member of his church to an outsider, if he believed that the two were fit partners and they, or one of them, felt that their union would be more sacred and binding if he performed the ceremony. Indeed, if I were a minister, I would marry two people of any religion whatever, if I believed they were proper spouses for each other and my blessing would strengthen the bonds between them. And I should refuse to perform the ceremony for two people of my own congregation, even in the absence of legal impediments, if I knew them to be incompatible."

"Not everyone has such liberal views," said Elvira. "Besides, the padre is not free to choose; he must do as he is told by his superiors in the hierarchy. Maybe we should let him marry us just to satisfy my parents, and not take the promise about the children too seriously. After all, what will bind us together is our love for each other, not the manner in which the ceremony is performed."

"But, Elvira, you would not have us start our life together with a lie!"

"A number of years must pass before we could have children old enough to understand about religion. In such a long time, people often change their minds. They may even be converted from one religion to another. No harm would be done if we gave the promise provisionally, not holding ourselves to be bound by it for ever."

"Still, I don't like it, Elvira. We must find some other way,"

"But what way?" she asked.

"I do not know. We must think about it longer," he answered.
"Father said that, if you loved me, you would consent to be married by the Church."

"How can you doubt that I love you, Elvira?"

"Because you permit a formality to stand in the way of our marriage."

"But to me it seems important that we begin right," he said. "No, you do not love me, and that is the reason why you are raising all the difficulties."

"Elvira!" he exclaimed in amazement, holding out his hands toward her, "Elvira!"

She turned from him, tears in her eyes, and started down the path toward the house. Feeling helpless and lost, he followed, speechless, as she was. The path was cut obliquely into a hillside, with a waist-high bank on the right. On both sides the woods were high, as this part of the plantation had not yet been cleaned. A green frog leapt out from the bank, traced a graceful curve in front of Elvira, and disappeared in the herbage on the outer side of the path. A moment later, a long black snake shot out of the woods beside her, brushing her skirt, to land in the pathway at her feet and slither into the vegetation below it, at the point where the frog had vanished.

Edwin, following several paces behind Elvira, saw exactly what happened. The black snake, which was not venomous, was pursuing its prey; intent upon the frog, it probably had not noticed the girl. Elvira's tear-dimmed eyes had not seen the frog. She saw only the snake, which seemed to have struck at her, missing her by inches. Terrified, she stood for a few moments as though frozen, then turned, rushed to Edwin, and clung to him. He threw his arms
around her and pressed her to himself. Not since he was a babe
in his mother's arms had he been so close to a woman. His heart
beat wildly. He pressed his lips to hers in a lingering kiss.

From the weeds below the path came a thin, grating note, so
sudden, sharp and shrill that it startled them. Elvira pulled
away from Edwin. They peered into the dense herbage, and she was
the first to notice the snake stretched out on the ground, with
the squealing frog in its distended mouth. Edwin wished to rescue
the victim; but by the time he had found a stick, the serpent had
vanished with its prey.

Without another word, Edwin escorted Elvira home. He left her
in the dooryard with only a low "good-bye." On the homeward ride,
he gave Callip free rein; immersed in thought, he hardly saw
where he was going. Nothing was working out as he had hoped.

First, his friend had bitterly disappointed him by abandoning
the principles that both had agreed to follow. His fiancée had
first shocked him by suggesting that he make a promise that he
had no intention to fulfill, then cut him to the quick by declar-
ing that he did not love her. To cap the climax, he had just had
a most disturbing revelation about himself. He believed that
spiritual harmony, shared ideals and aims, should precede
physical intimacy, yet, just at the time when he felt spiritually
most distant from Elvira, he had, impulsively, clasped her in
the closest embrace. He had underestimated the intensity of
the fire smoldering within him, and was amazed to discover
with how little provocation it could burst into flame.
It was humiliating to think that he, who had always been so proud
of his self-control, owed his prompt recall to himself to the
timely squeal of a dying frog. He was grateful to the frog, and
regretted that he could not save it. He remembered the conversation
with his father, as they sat beside the forest pool on the day
after he returned from the North. The elements of his character were, no doubt, happily blended, yet he could not afford to be overconfident. As he had just seen, an accident might upset his equilibrium.

Might not the trouble be that he demanded too much, both of himself and of those he loved? The rigid trunk is snapped by the gale, before which more flexible stems bend and are saved. How much easier everything would be if he could accept current valuations, instead of stubbornly adhering to his own more exacting standards! In the eyes of the world, nothing that Eugene Rivers proposed to do was wrong; on the contrary, his effort to contribute to science would be applauded. Why must he feel estranged from Gene, even while making allowances for his apostasy? As to having his children indoctrinated with religious beliefs that he could not accept for himself, did not many respected men do just that? Besides, there might never be any children; many marriages are barren. In this case, he would have made Elvira unhappy for nothing. Yet even if a doctor had assured him that there would be no children, he doubted whether he could have made the promise which the Church demanded, since he regarded it as wrong in principle.

Suppose that he did lower his standards and take the easier way; would he be happier? Although he owed largely to his father those principles of conduct that set him apart from other people, he had made them his own. They were so congenial to his inmost constitution, so much part of himself, that even if his father had taught him nothing, he believed that they would have issued
from the depths of his being, so that he would not have been otherwise than he now found himself. His case was different from that of Harold, whose temperament differed so greatly from his father's and his own that many of his father's precepts fell on barren ground. They remained external to Harold, who might follow them to please his parents, but from no necessity to remain true to himself. Edwin felt that he must, at all costs, remain true to himself, lest he end by despising himself, in which case he would doubtless despise others, too. Although at times he felt keenly the irony of our human situation, he could not imagine himself adopting a cynical attitude toward life; it would clash too violently with his constitutional earnestness. As he allowed himself to be carried passively along the road by his loitering horse, he found himself repeating old Polonius's admonition to Laertes:

To thine own self be true;

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Edwin's intransigence sprang not from a hard, vindictive, puritanical nature, but from his very gentleness and the wide scope of his love. That passion for wholeness to which his father had once alluded was not directed to himself alone; he wished all things to be whole. It hurt him to see any creature deprived, mutilated, prevented by adverse circumstances from becoming a perfect example of its kind. As he walked through the forest, he habitually chose the passages where the ground was barest, even at the cost of making a detour, so as not to break or trample the low vegetation; and often he would remove fallen branches that
were bending over young saplings or palm trees, so that they might grow straight and tall. Added to his passion for beholding all creatures whole and happy was his habit, derived from early training, of seeing each human act in its wider context, so that practices which seemed innocent or harmless to others were often, in his eyes, tinged with the horror of their invisible antecedents or their more remote consequences. He was frequently shocked by these antecedents, distressed by these consequences; and the older he grew, the more careful he became to spare himself this pain by the thoughtful regulation of his conduct. A cynical analyst of human behavior might have alleged that Edwin shrank from injuring others in order to save his own sensitive spirit from distress. The cynic would have been at least partly right in his analysis, but wrong in his valuation. For is it not, after all, just the sympathy that binds us to other sentient creatures, so that, often despite ourselves, we suffer when they suffer and are happy when they are happy, that makes us moral beings?

Callip could go no farther, for he had reached the gate that gave access to the home pasture. The horse's sudden halt recalled Edwin's wandering thoughts, and he dismounted to open the gate. When they reached the house, he found that everyone had gathered on the porch to hear Beto's report of how he had found a neighbor's cattle in the banana grove. Through a gap in the fence, a dozen cows and calves had wandered in. They had evidently been there all night before he discovered them, drove them out, and mended the fence. They had done much damage, by eating or pulling over many of the young shoots of bananas and plantains that would have
borne fruit in the next rainy season.

"Who do you think cut the wire, Beto?" Mr. Fernley asked.

"Not the owner of the cattle, who has always been a good neighbor. Somebody who does not love us."

"Who would that be?"

"There were no witnesses, so we cannot accuse anybody. We can only guess."

It was not difficult for the Fernleys to guess who had inflicted this injury on them, but nothing could be proved.

"I hope that Raul Garro will now feel that he has settled accounts with us for not permitting him to carry off the monkey that he shot in our forest, and that his vengeful spirit is satisfied," said Mrs. Fernley.

"Probably not!" her husband replied laconically.
Chapter 12

RECONCILIATION

The following morning, Edwin returned to his neglected research with a feeling of relief. However his friends might disappoint him, however his beloved might misunderstand him, in the study of nature he could always find solace and delight. Nature may be aloof but she is impartial; she does not capriciously withhold her secrets from those who question her with intelligent persistence. Because as a scientist he asked nothing of her save that she reveal herself as she actually is, she could not disappoint him. However much as a man of tender feeling he might wish nature to be less harsh, as investigator his first duty was to discover the facts about her. So marvellous were her productions, so unexpected the things she did, that it was easy to forget her frequent ruthlessness in the absorbing task of uncovering her secrets. He already knew too much to imagine that he could attain an exhaustive knowledge of nature, or even of some larger division of the vegetable kingdom in which he might choose to specialize. After the first shock of disappointment, he saw that this limitation of his knowledge did not matter. On the contrary, it was better that nature was so inexhaustible that the human mind could never encompass her, for thereby he was assured that he would never lack fresh subjects to study and the delight that discovery can bring.

Edwin stropped his heavy razor until it would split a hair. With a scissors, he cut a little strip from a leaf, placed it between two pieces of elder pith that he had flattened on one side,
and cut thinnest slices from the leaf with the moistened razor. The shavings of pith floated slowly to the floor, while with a finger tip he carefully transferred the bits of leaf to a bowl of water. Choosing the thinnest of the sections, he placed them in a drop of water on a microscope slide, laid a thin cover glass over them, and put the slide on the stage of his microscope.

While Edwin was examining his sections through the microscope, there came a gentle tap on the open door behind him. Turning, he saw Elvira standing in the doorway. Her face was pale, and a dark semicircle was faintly discernible beneath each eye. She looked as though she had not slept well.

"Good morning, Edwin," she said. "Excuse the interruption, but I must speak to you. I have something important to tell you."

"Come in," he said, offering her a chair. "No one will interrupt us here. Mother and Violet are in the kitchen, Father and Harold out in the farm."

"I have come to ask your pardon, both for what I said yesterday and for what I did. I was wrong to suggest that we make a promise that we did not intend to keep, and I lied when I declared that you do not love me. I did not mean to say it, but I was upset by the turn that our conversation had taken, and I spoke wildly. And I should not have clung to you in the pathway."

"You had a terrifying experience with the snake. Probably you thought that it struck at you, although I saw that it was only pursuing the frog. I would have been alarmed myself, if I had been in your place. Certainly I forgive you, if there is anything to forgive."
Women do in northern countries and are beginning to do here, too.

Let us not confuse China for lightly disregarding the command of the Church in which she had been reared. What would she do if she lost Calvin to stubbornly insisting on being married by the people? Would the man of her mother's choice, whom she could not despise and trust half as much as Calvin and hardly loved at all? On like her friend Dobrac, take the nun's veil in a spiritual wedlock with the traditional imagery of the Old Testament, and may while in the flesh have differed greatly from our present conception of him? Such faith and love as Dobrac had was beautiful and pathetic, yet to China it did not seem to be the highest kind of faith or the strongest kind of love. If there is indeed something divine in the universe, it should not confine its dealing with us to a local revelation in the distant past and a promise for the future. It should be present here and
now, and since obviously it does not
reveal itself to us directly as a vision in
the heavens or on earth, or as a sound
audible to our ears, it must, if it exist
at all, lie camouflaged in the heart of things
rather than display itself on the surface.

For no more necessary for our spiritual welfare
than faith in ancient dogmas is faith in
the things we know: in life that it is not
just a heaving breath on the surface this
planet but has meaning and purpose; in
those who surround us that they are
honorable, constant and dependable.

Elvira had this faith in the man she loved,
the man so eager to make life good and
beautiful and joyful for all. She would
devote him, even if it estranged her from
the religion of her ancestors. She had
reached this decision through a night of
intense emotional struggle, which had left
its marks on her face.

"We needn't be hard, Elvira," Colin
replied. "We haven't been tried to him"
"I have been thinking much about what you said yesterday, and I see that you are right in refusing to be married by the padre, since you must make that promise about the children's religion. We must above all be sincere with our children, and not have them taught what we do not ourselves believe, for otherwise we shall estrange them from ourselves. I'm willing to have a civil marriage, if you prefer that. Doubtless Father and Mother will be angry for a while; but they will get over it soon enough, and be glad to have you for a son-in-law, especially if we give them some grandchildren, whom they will adore. After all, I'm a grown woman now, and must make the decisions which affect my life, as women do in northern countries, and are beginning to do here, too."

"We need not be hasty, Elvira. We haven't even tried to win your parents' approval yet. I think that we should have a civil marriage, but, if possible, with their approval. Although we would like to be wedded earlier, I would rather wait until next August or September than cause a rupture with your parents. Possibly by that time we can win their consent, especially if we go slowly and you use all your power of persuasion, which is considerable."

"You always think of the better way," said Elvira. "Let's agree, then, to wait until next August, if we cannot win my parents' consent sooner. But it does seem a long way off."

"It's only eight months. They'll slip by quickly enough."

"And Edwin, I think that we must be very careful to...to avoid a repetition of what happened yesterday. My parents have given us
more freedom to be alone together than most girls are allowed, because they trust us. Nothing must happen to show them that their trust was misplaced."

"I would rather die than betray their trust. But we must be very careful, especially if we have to wait a long while for our wedding. It's so easy to go too far, when one is in love."

"Perhaps we should not even kiss each other."

"Only with our eyes. Where there is true love, there are many ways of showing it." While saying this, Edwin gazed at her with such adoring affection that the color rose to her cheeks, dispelling the last vestiges of the pallor with which she had arrived.

"I must go now. I have already interrupted your work long enough. And I'll begin today to work on Father, insinuating our more liberal views into his mind so gently and imperceptibly that he will hardly suspect what is happening to him. When he has been won over, doubtless he will help me to convince Mother, which will be more difficult, as she is more deeply attached to the faith of her ancestors. And if I win this campaign, I shall consider myself eligible for a post in the diplomatic corps. Perhaps the government will make me its ambassador to Washington."

"It couldn't do better. You would get anything your government wanted from Uncle Sam. But I fear that I would cut a poor figure as an ambassador's husband. I'm too straightforward in what I say, and I'm not fond of champagne and cocktails."

"Neither am I. I'm too attached to the simple life to accept the diplomatic post that they will be urging me to take, after I have convinced my mother. But I must not vaunt before I have won
the battle, for victory is by no means a foregone conclusion."

"I'll bet you win, Elvira! When you try, you can be really irresistible."

"If I don't go now, you won't finish your work by September, and we shall not be ready to go to the States," she said, rising.

"Would you like to see what I have under the microscope? It's a section through a leaf of the plant that I am studying," said Edwin. Noticing that his preparation had almost dried out while they were talking, he took his pipette to place a drop of water at the edge of the cover glass, beneath which it was drawn by capillary attraction.

Elvira sat in Edwin's chair and applied her eye to the microscope. He showed her how to turn the fine adjustment until the image was sharply in focus for her. Unaccustomed to a microscope, it took her a while to distinguish what was before her. While she admired the tissue that filled the round field, he admired the arch of her white neck.

"How beautiful it is!" she exclaimed at last. "How regularly the cells are lined up in rows, especially those at the top of the leaf! I had no idea that plants are as beautiful through a microscope as when you see them with your naked eye. Are they all that way?"

"Most vegetable tissues display a very attractive pattern when magnified. Some plants are prettiest when seen through the microscope."

"No wonder that you love to study them! What are those little green bodies inside the cells?" she asked.
"Those are the chloroplasts, which capture the energy of sunlight to build up molecules of sugar from water and carbon dioxide. All the food you ever ate was made, in the first instance, in little green bodies much like those."

"I must learn more about those things. And now, good-bye."

"What a good, sensible girl Elvira is!" thought Edwin when she had gone. "How lucky I am that she will have me, even if she must defy her parents' wishes in order to marry me. But I hope it will not come to that. I'm glad we made that agreement about kissing. It will be much easier for us that way, if we have a long wait. I do not feel so confident in myself as I did before yesterday. Now each of us understands that the other's restraint is not due to coldness or lack of affection, but rather to just the opposite, to the intensity of our love for each other and our determination that nothing shall profane this love."

Edwin had no puritanical abhorrence of sex. On the contrary, he had been taught from boyhood to regard the power to produce new life as a sacred trust, and everything connected with this power as, in a sense, holy. He believed that the shame and embarrassment, the feeling of uncleanness, which so often attaches to sex, is due to its profanation by improper use and the coarse, unseemly manner in which men so often talk about it; and that if we could bring our thoughts and acts in this sphere into perfect harmony with the natural end of sexual desire, to generate new life, the sense of guilt would be wholly dissipated. But he knew that this harmony between sexual behavior and its natural end is difficult to achieve, because throughout the realm of life the
generative power is commonly far in excess of the needs of reproduction, thereby ensuring the quick recovery of any species that is threatened with extinction by some disaster; and that in man, which of all species has been most successful in safeguarding and prolonging life, and which unlike nearly all species of animals is able to reproduce throughout the year, this disproportion between the generative power and the need to maintain the population has reached its maximum. But even if the harmony between thought and act, between desire and its natural end, were hard to achieve, he had resolved to spare no effort to achieve it.

Edwin was the more determined to take this course because he already realized, what some of us do not discover until late in life and others apparently never, that the chief consideration in all our conduct is how it will appear in memory. Our acts are transient, but our remembrance of them may endure to the end of our conscious existence. A pleasure enjoyed in shameful circumstances, or to the neglect of duty, may leave a trail of sorrow and regret through all our remaining years; whereas pain, hardship or discomfort, if cheerfully endured for the sake of some worthy end, may be remembered with pleasure as long as we live. In memory, then, our pleasures may become our pains, our pains become our pleasures; and it is in memory that our acts are preserved for us. The whole past life of each of us is above all a fabric of memory, on whose growing edge we weave a little more each day that brings forth anything memorable. Edwin was intensely eager to give this fabric of his life a richly varied pattern, devoid of all ugly flaws.
Chapter 13

THE PICNIC

As the dry season advanced, the current of the Aguas Claras River continued to shrink, until its roar was subdued to a rustling murmur that spoke of leisure rather than of impetuous haste. The river-weeds that grew on the rocks in the streambed, and had miraculously survived the scouring by October's floods, were now left exposed by the falling current. One might mistake them for bright green mosses and seaweeds, if he failed to notice the tiny petalless flowers which they held above the rocks on slender stalks, to be promptly followed by many-seeded pods that resembled the capsules of mosses. In the riverside thickets and at the woodland's edge, masses of morning-glories, of the most delicate shades of pink and purple, made a delectable display on the trees and bushes over which the green vines spread. The sunfruit trees, which had opened their little yellowish flowers early in the dry season, were now covered with feathery clusters of ripening fruits of the softest shade of red. Soon the light breezes wafted the tiny rayed achenes over all the fields and thickets. Each day at dawn, the sobralia orchids, that grew in dense clusters on shaded rocks in the pasture, opened a new set of large creamy flowers, which exhaled their delicate fragrance for a single morning, then closed for ever. Throughout January the mornings were refreshingly cool in the shade, and so brilliant that the farthest mountains stood out in sharp relief. The earth, soaked by long months of
heavy rain, and still wetted by an occasional light afternoon shower, retained until the month's end enough moisture to support its flowery mantle of green.

In the middle of this delightful month, Elvira's mother and four younger sisters arrived from San José, along with an oxcart-load of baggage, to pass the school vacation at Santa Teresia. The big wooden house, which through much of the year stood nearly empty, again resounded with talk, laughter, song, and the steps of many active feet on its bare floors. Despite obvious differences in temperament, the Trevanas were a happy and united family. In her middle forties, Doña Luisa Aguilar de Trevana, the girls' mother, showed not a single silvery strand in her dark brown hair nor a wrinkle in her plump face. She was pretty, and might have been beautiful if she had not, by taking too much food and too little exercise, allowed herself to become flabby—as Elvira vowed she would never let happen to herself. Educated by nuns, Doña Luisa wrote a beautiful script, read French as well as Spanish, sewed excellently, and, with the aid of hired girls whom she carefully trained, kept a clean and well-ordered home. In the city, where she lived within walking distance of a church, she was regular in her attendance at the early morning mass and rarely let a month go by without visiting the confessional booth. On principle, she would read nothing that did not bear the imprimatur of the Church; by inclination, nothing that taxed her mind. Melodramatic romances with happy endings were her preferred literature. Now she presided gracefully over the household at Santa
Teresa, relieving Elvira of a responsibility which she had faithfully borne for the past ten months.

The eldest child of Don Mariano and Doña Luisa was Elvira, who in her active mind, no less than in her black hair and deep brown eyes, resembled her father more than her mother. Next had followed a boy who died in infancy, leaving a void which the young parents had hoped promptly to fill. But several years passed without bringing another baby, and then more girls began to arrive. As the sex of each became evident, the parents, especially the father, felt a twinge of disappointment; they then loved her as tenderly as though she had come according to specifications.

The eldest of these four younger sisters was Elena, who now at seventeen was already nearly as tall as her mother and gave promise of becoming as stout, unless she carefully watched her figure. She had a clear, fresh complexion, and the long lashes that shaded her large, dark eyes suggested a voluptuous languor. Already she loved elegant clothes and parties where she shone in the midst of admiring young men; it was easy to understand why she preferred the city to the farm. The next sister, Teresa, was fifteen, black-haired like her father, somewhat gangling and awkward as she stood, as though embarrassed, on the threshold of young womanhood. At an interval of only a year, she was followed by Anna María, who of all the younger sisters most resembled Elvira. She had the quickest intelligence and was the best student of the four who were still in school; but each year as the dry season approached, she could hardly
wait until classes ended and she could return to the country, with her father and eldest sister and the horses and all the fascinating activities of a farm. The youngest of the sisters, Margarita, was a slender girl of twelve, whose blue eyes and fair hair, inherited from her maternal grandmother, contrasted with the darker eyes and treasues of all the others. Admiring female relations whispered that she would be the prettiest of the five sisters; but, still unconscious of her looks, she loved to climb trees, ride horses, and swim in the river, as much as any boy.

During the six happy weeks when the Trevana family was united, there was much visiting back and forth between Santa Teresa and Selva Alegre, especially by the young people. Harold spent almost all his free time with the Trevana girls. He had learned to strum the guitar, and in the evenings all sang to the accompaniment of his simple music. Each day he grew fonder of Elena, until he reached the point where he confided to his mother that he hoped one day to marry her. Mrs. Fernley took this opportunity to remind him gently that, if he seriously entertained such intentions, he would do well to prepare himself to earn a good living, for his prospective bride was already developing expensive tastes. She would not be content with the simple life that Elvira was willing to lead.

Toward the end of Doña Luisa's sojourn on the farm with her daughters, the Trevanas prepared the most memorable of the picnics which they enjoyed during this period. Not far below Santa Teresa was a deep pool through which the Aguas Claras
river flowed smoothly, a short distance above its confluence with the Río General. Since this still reach in a boisterous stream was a good way from the house, they decided to take the oxcart. The morning was half spent before the cart, elaborately painted with flowers on the box and a rayed design on the solid wooden wheels, was laden with all the food which Doña Luisa and her girls had long been preparing, with jugs of fruit drinks and bathing suits and towels and cushions and canvas to spread over the ground. After one of his farm hands had yoked the wide-horned oxen to the cart, Don Mariano himself took the brass-tipped goad to guide them. His wife and second daughter, wearing wide-brimmed straw hats to shield their complexions from the sun's fierce rays and well-cushioned against the many bumps along the rough roadways, rode in the cart with the baggage. Harold and Teresa were mounted on horses. Edwin and Violet left their horses in the paddock at Santa Teresa and walked with Don Mariano and Elvira. Anna María and Margarita were alternately in and out of the cart, walking when they were tired of the bumps, and bumping along when they were tired of walking. As the carefree party proceeded down the valley, through pastures, coffee plantations, canefields and second-growth thickets, their chatter and laughter was punctuated by the hammer-notes of the cart, whose heavy wheels were purposely left a little loose, so that at each inequality in the roadway they might emit a solid-sounding note to assure the ox-driver that the cart was moving.

Soon the party passed a large shed, in which a man and two
boys were milling sugarcane. The oxcart was halted so that the younger girls could watch. Beneath the high-peaked roof, thatched with cane leaves; two yoked oxen were walking round and round, kept in motion by a lad of eight or ten who followed them with a stick. Their yoke was attached to a heavy horizontal beam above their heads, which, as it slowly revolved, turned the vertical steel cylinders of the cane press. The older boy was feeding the long, stout canes, one by one, into the press, from which flowed a steady stream of sugary sap. Meanwhile, the man was kindling a fire beneath a huge copper cauldron, in which the juice would be boiled until it became thick enough to form hard bricks of brown dulce in the round molds into which the steaming fluid would be poured.

Margarita wished to drink some of the sweet juice that flowed from the cane press, but her father said that she mustn't, because the escaping sap washed the dirt from the outside of the canes. It would be purified, or at least sterilized, by the prolonged boiling. The man in charge of the work picked up a stout cane, from which, with his machete, he skillfully peeled off all the hard cortex, leaving only the soft, pure white central tissue, which he cut into small pieces for all who wished to take them. The party resumed its march with nearly everyone chewing fibrous bits of cane, from which the saccharine juice gushed forth under the pressure of their teeth. The man promised that, if they would stop by on their return in the afternoon, he would give them some mabado, the soft, light-colored, caramel-like sugar that is formed by
syrup removed from the cauldron just as it becomes thick enough to set as it cools.

When the party reached the pool, the cart was stationed on the riverbank, then the oxen were unyoked and turned out to graze in a neighboring pasture, along with the two horses. There was no lack of shrubbery to screen the girls from the men while everyone got into bathing suits, except Doña Luisa, who preferred not to expose her stout limbs. shrieks of feigned agony rose above the stream's murmur as the girls' tender skin felt the chill which hurrying waters had carried down from frosty heights. Most preferred to cushion the shock by wetting their arms and legs with their hands before immersing themselves; but Harold, to show his manliness, plunged boldly in, and Teresa, who secretly admired his muscular figure, followed his example. Soon all were swimming or splashing in the transparent water, their vigorous exercise making it feel warmer.

Harold demonstrated how he could swim from end to end of the pool completely under water. He encouraged the girls to practice underwater swimming and surface-diving — the pool was too shallow to plunge in from a height — but Teresa was the only one who seriously tried it, and after getting a noseful of water, she declared that she had had enough for one day. After warming themselves by swimming around the pool a few times, Edwin and Elvira undertook to teach Margarita to swim, while Don Mariano helped Anna María to improve her stroke. Presently one of the swimmers discovered that it was great fun to beat
strenuously against the current to the shallows at the head of
the pool, then float on your back while the stream bore you
downward until your feet struck the rocks at the pool's
lower end.

After half an hour, Doña Luisa, who had been watching from
a comfortable seat on the shore, announced that the girls must
come out of the water before they became chilled. While they
stood on the shore draining off, Edwin demonstrated how he
could make a small flat stone skip over the surface of the
pool to the farther shore. Harold thought that he could do
better than Edwin, but, although he could throw a stone farther,
he could not make it ricochet as many times; he did not have
the same knack of making it strike the water at grazing inci-
dence, so that it would bounce up again. Soon the girls were
imitating the brothers, but many of the stones that they threw
promptly dived beneath the pool's surface instead of skimming
over it. This game was continued until it became difficult to
find suitable flat pebbles. Then everyone sunned, sitting on
the rocks or lying on the canvas spread on the ground. The
careful mother made sure that this was not continued long
enough to burn delicate white skin. Soon it was time to dress
and prepare for lunch.

Edwin found a tortoise amid the herbage on some low ground
beside the stream. Its low, dusky carapace lacked the bright
red or yellow ornamentation of many northern turtles, but it
aroused great interest because it was the first land turtle
that most members of the party had seen. The girls were amused
by its ability to fold itself tightly inside its shell whenever it was disturbed. Placing it at a distance from themselves, they watched it cautiously stick out its snaky head and short stout legs, look around to assure itself that the coast was clear, then clumsily march away over the uneven ground, to withdraw into its shell once more when they easily overtook it.

"Lucky animal!" exclaimed Don Mariano. "Whenever the world becomes too difficult, it can so easily retire into its shell and shut the world out. When things go wrong on the farm, or I fail to please my wife and daughters, I sometimes wish that I could do the same."

After a few repetitions, however, the dusky tortoise would no longer enclose itself in the box that it carried on its back but persisted in its efforts to escape. Edwin returned it to the marshy ground where he had found it.

Lunch was now spread on a piece of canvas, in the deep shade of a large muñeco tree that grew near the river. Elvira had thought that her mother was preparing too much food, but healthy young appetites, sharpened by exercise in the cool water, made nearly all of it disappear. After the meal, the picnickers separated. Don Mariano led Edwin away to examine a neighboring coffee planting that he admired, and Teresa accompanied them. Coffee planters argue as endlessly over diverse systems of pruning, cultivating, and shading their plantations as theologians over the interpretation of Scripture; and as Edwin had been away from the tropics too long to have strong opinions on these matters, his prospective father-in-law was blessed with
an auditor who could only politely assent to his views. Harold managed to entice Elena away to a shady rock at the water's edge. Violet sat on a stranded log between Anna Maria and Margarita, asking them questions about their school and telling them about her own school days in the States, where she went with their eldest sister. Elvira helped her mother pack the picnic things for the homeward journey, then remained talking to her. From the distance, Harold and Elena could watch them.

"It's not hard to guess what they are talking about," she remarked to her companion.

"What would that be?" he asked.

"She's still trying to persuade Mother to consent to a civil marriage, which Mother is reluctant to do."

"What a silly pair, wanting to marry all this time and letting a formality keep them apart! If I made up my mind to permit marry, I would never let a small matter like how it's to be done to stand in my way. The trouble is that Edwin wants too much. He insists on having goodness and beauty --that's Elvira-- and truth all at the same time. That's the reason why he will not promise to have his children taught things that cannot be proved."

"If Elvira had accepted Rafael, who was crazy to have her, she would be happily married now, with her own house and a fine car, and all the clothes she wanted. What an opportunity to throw away!" Then, fearing that she might have offended Harold by implying an unfavorable comparison with his brother,
she hastened to add: "Edwin is good, and so intelligent that I'm sure he'll go far in his profession, but he's very stubborn."

"Yes, there's no doubt that he's often stubborn. Sometimes he seems to think that he knows what is right better than anyone else --he gets that from Father-- and then you can't do a thing to change him. Once, however, I made him more reasonable. I suppose you don't remember Eugene Rivers, who came home with Edwin during their summer vacation nearly four years ago. Well, anyhow, Gene wished to spend some time with us studying birds, and Edwin was pleased about it, until he learned that Gene's professor insisted that he make a collection of them. Then Edwin got angry and said that Gene couldn't come; but finally I arranged for him to come anyway. He's going to stay with Don Francisco Rodríguez while he collects birds, then come to us to study their nests. I'm glad, because I like Gene, and I believe that Violet more than likes him, although now she pretends to be disgusted with him."

"Perhaps they will marry," suggested Elena.

"That's what I've been thinking. If they do, then it will be my turn."

"You're still very young to marry --for a man."

"Soon I'll be twenty...Elena, you would never consider marrying a farmer, would you?"

"I certainly prefer to live in the city, or quite near it. I wouldn't mind marrying a farmer who had a house in San José and went out every day to his plantation, as quite a number of
wealthy farmers do, but I wouldn't wish to be stuck all my life here in the backwoods, as poor Father is, or to live away from my husband much of the time, as Mother does."

"But perhaps if you were very much in love with a farmer who lived way off, you would marry him," Harold suggested.

"Perhaps I would. People sometimes do very foolish things when they are madly in love."

Pleased to have elicited at least this concession from a girl he admired, Harold, who was still far from being madly in love, abruptly changed the subject of their conversation.

Elena was not mistaken when she told Harold that Elvira was again tackling her mother on a subject that they had frequently discussed before. "Haven't you made up your mind yet, Mother?" she asked as she dried the gaily colored metal cups that she had washed in the river and arranged them in a basket. "In a few days you will be returning to the city, and Edwin and I want so much to have your answer before you leave."

"You and Edwin are very careful to do nothing that goes against your conscience, but you don't seem to care how much I offend my poor conscience by consenting to a course that I hold to be wrong. Why are you so much more eager to have your parents' approval than the sacrament of the Church, which would be worth much more to you?"

"We love our parents and wish to remain on good terms with all four of them, but we aren't sure how much the sacrament will help us to be a good husband and wife. Many couples married by the Church are far from happy together. If you believe
that Edwin and I are suited to each other and will be happy, and that, if we are blessed with children, we are likely to bring them up in a way that will make you and Father proud of your grandchildren, what reason can you have for opposing our marrying in the way that seems best to us?"

"No doubt you are suited to each other, and have enough good sense to bring up your children to be honest and industrious and successful in this world. But this is not the only world; you must also consider their prospects in the next world; and you know that outside the Church there is no salvation. I could never forgive myself if, through laxness on my part, my grandchildren grew up unbaptised and unredeemed, as the three young Fernleys are."

"Whom do you know who lives more correctly, who is kinder and more charitable, than all the Fernleys are?" asked Elvira. "I know that Harold is a trifle wild, but even so, he is better than a number of young men of respected church-going families whom I could name. Do you really believe that God would exclude them from heaven, because they are unbaptised and don't belong to the Church, while He admits a professed Catholic who attends mass and confesses regularly, so as to be absolved from one sin before he commits another? I don't see any justice in that. If Edwin and Violet can't enter heaven, I don't care to go there either."

"The ways of God surpass our understanding. Our only safe way is to believe what the Mother Church teaches us," replied Doña Luisa.
"And do you believe, Mother, that all the good men who lived before Jesus was born, or afterward but in distant countries which the Gospel had not reached, are doomed to eternal torment, or at best to a barren existence in limbo as in Dante's Divine Comedy, because they were not baptised Christians?"

"I remember that once your father asked Padre Donavides about that. The padre replied that if people who had no opportunity to hear the Gospel were such that, if they could have heard it, they would have accepted it and believed in Christ, they would be saved, provided that their lives were otherwise blameless. But such indulgence, of course, could hardly apply to the Fernleys, or to your own children if they were to remain unbaptised by the Church, because in these cases there is no lack of opportunity to embrace the Faith."

"Well," remarked Elvira, "perhaps God can tell what a person would believe if the circumstances of his life were different from what they are, but I am certain that no man can. What we believe depends on the culture in which we happened to grow up, and how our minds were trained, and how carefully we weigh the evidence that is presented to us. Some people can’t believe religious dogmas because their intellectual honesty will not permit them to accept statements for which the evidence seems insufficient, and that is the case with Edwin. To me it seems incredible that God would penalize anybody for using to the best of his ability the intelligence that God gave him. Perhaps my faith is stronger than yours, for I believe that we shall attain whatever good is in store for us in a future life, if we have a pure and loving heart, and live decently, and are com-
passionate to all creatures, and that it makes little difference what ceremonies we perform or fail to perform, or what dogmas we profess or fail to profess. Unless I am greatly mistaken, this was the essence of the teaching of Jesus, which would be clear to you if you studied the Gospels, as Edwin suggested that I do."

"You may be right, but that is not what the Church teaches," said Doña Luisa.

"Well, Mother, Edwin and I have discussed this matter a great deal, together and with Don Guillermo, and are willing to stake our future happiness, and that of whatever children we might have, on the correctness of our view. We have both reached the age when we must assume full responsibility for our own lives; and we don't think it fair to place this heavy burden on anyone else. All we ask of you is that you give our union a mother's approval and blessing, and be present when we are married by the governor of this province. Father will give his consent, if you do."

"I see that your minds are made up, and it's useless to oppose you any longer. After our return to San José, I'll ask Padre Benavides whether, without incurring sin, I can give my consent and be present when you are married by a civil magistrate. If he gives permission, I shall do so. More I cannot promise at present."

"Thank you, dearest Mother. I knew that we would never quarrel," said Elvira, feeling that she had won at least a partial victory.
Soon Don Mariano returned from the coffee plantation with Edwin and Teresa. Harold helped him to catch and yoke the oxen, while Edwin saddled the two horses. Doña Luisa, Elena and Margarita climbed into the cart; Violet and Anna Marfa were persuaded to mount the horses; and the party started homeward as the sun declined in the west.

A few days later, Doña Luisa returned to the Capital with her four younger daughters. Elvira and Edwin waited eagerly to learn the outcome of her consultation with her spiritual adviser. But before the answer arrived, the country was shaken by a movement which pushed the young lovers' personal affairs into the background.
Chapter 14

THE BIRD COLLECTOR

The light afternoon showers that helped to keep January so delightfully green and fresh failed to replenish the moisture that the valley's lush flora withdrew from its soil during the bright sunny days. As February advanced, the days became warmer, and by the month's end, the afternoons were oppressively hot. The vegetation languished everywhere except along the shrunken larger streams. Small brooks dried up. In woods and thickets, the ground was carpeted with brown fallen leaves, that rustled loudly underfoot and warned all the birds and quadrupeds of a man's approach. Although few trees became leafless, many bore sparser foliage, making the forest appear more open. Now one could look for some distance into the dense second-growth thickets, which in the wet season presented a solid wall of verdure. In these drying thickets, the loud reports of bursting seed-pods shattered the midday silence. In the thin upland pastures, the grass was turning brown on the parched, cracking soil.

Toward the end of February, columns of smoke began to rise in the shimmering air of early afternoon, from the hillsides or bottom lands where the settlers were burning the forests and thickets that they had cut down and allowed to dry, in preparation for planting maize or rice. After nightfall, a ruddy glare hung over many a distant burning slope. Gradually
the air, polluted by daily increments of smoke, became heavier and more oppressive. The distant summits, then the nearer foothills, faded from view in the ashen haze that hung over the valley. Each morning a sun bereft of rays floated up into the murky sky, which it traversed in a sullen mood, to vanish at its journey's end with no parting caress of roseate glory. Then only the brightest stars peeped out through the pall of smoke; and the moon, when it rose, glowed dully like a heated stone. The dry season, which had begun by being the most delightful time of the year, became toward its end so enervating and depressing that nearly everyone, except short-sighted, avaricious farmers who could not burn over enough land to satisfy their mania for planting, eagerly awaited the return of the rains.

One evening in late February, Mr. Fernley, who had been San Isidro obliged to go to Jarama on business, returned home weary, parched, dusty, and disturbed by the news he had heard. The political atmosphere of the country was heavily charged with electricity. The coalition which for eight years had governed the republic had nullified the recent election of the opposition candidate, Don Otilio Ulate. People were tired of a regime that had been marked by increasing Communist influence, declining respect for law, misuse of public money, and acts of violence perpetrated by armed henchmen of the Government. If the president-elect were not permitted to assume office, his supporters would probably start a revolution, which all the dissatisfied elements of the population would join.

"Perhaps we should advise Gene Rivers not to come," Mr.
Fernley said later in the evening. "Nobody can foretell what will happen here if a revolution breaks out. Gene would be safer elsewhere."

"But he's planning to leave two days from now," said Edwin. "It would be difficult to get word to him in time to stop his departure, and it would certainly be most upsetting to have to change his plans on such short notice."

"Since at first we were in doubt whether he should come, he might think that we don't want him after all, and the rumor of revolution is just an excuse for putting him off," added Harold.

"Well, I suppose he must come, then, and take his chances with the rest of us. But we cannot guarantee his safety—or our own," Mr. Fernley concluded.

The village

A week later, Edwin went to Uruña to meet Rivers and bring him back to Selva Alegre. As they rode homeward over the dusty highway, the two friends, who had once been so much at ease together, felt strained and slightly unhappy. For a long while, both carefully refrained from mentioning the subject that neither could exclude from his thoughts. Eugene asked many questions about things they saw along the way; and for the rest, they talked of mutual acquaintances, happenings at the university, the rapid changes of the postwar world—anything except what Edwin most wanted yet hesitated to speak about.
Finally, as they neared the house, he asked Eugene whether he believed that, after all, he could bring himself to kill the beautiful, harmless creatures that he professed to love. Eugene's answer, that he hoped he was man enough to do the work which he must do to advance his scientific career, gave his interlocutor so little encouragement that he deemed it best to drop the subject for the present. By the time he had shown the visitor to his room, he was tired, disgusted with his own lack of diplomacy and persuasive eloquence, and oppressed by the feeling that he had done wrong in consenting to Eugene's coming. Violet, noticing her brother's depression, tried to cheer him up by telling him that she felt sure everything would work out for the best in the end.

Eugene Rivers was one of those big, positive, outgoing men whom it is difficult to ignore. Most people were promptly won by his cheerful, good-humored affability; but a minority, doubting his sincerity or ruffled by his too-hearty manner, as promptly resented him. Although he and Edwin had been drawn together by shared interests and mutual respect, their characters contrasted in many ways. Eugene was the more extroverted; Edwin, the more introverted. Both were generous; but Eugene was the readier to give others what they desired; whereas Edwin wished them to have what he believed to be best for them. Eugene was eager to win the favorable opinion of others, while Edwin cared less for other men's approval than for that of his own exacting conscience. One familiar with both might have sur-
mised that the first advances of friendship were made by Eugene, although Edwin came forth to meet them; and in this surmise he would have been correct.

Eugene had wished to come earlier in the year, but was delayed by his work at the university. Now that the season was so far advanced, he could devote little time to collecting, without interfering with the studies he wished to make. Accordingly, he allowed himself a single day at Salva Alegre, but he made the most of it. He remembered everybody and everything from his nearly previous visit four years earlier. He asked a hundred questions. He spoke intimately with everybody, and even practiced his halting Spanish on Beto and his family, who tried hard to understand, and were too polite to smile at the glaring blunders in syntax and pronunciation that he made in almost every sentence. He strolled through the garden with Violet, showing such friendly interest in her and her activities that she almost forgot her disapproval of what he was about to do. Both she and Edwin would have been vastly relieved if they could have prevented his shooting a single bird; but after discussing the matter together, the brother and sister agreed that it would be unseemly, and in the long run probably detrimental to their cause, to try so soon after his arrival to divert him from the course which they had agreed in advance that he would take. They did not wish him to think that they had brought him here under false pretenses.

Harold had made arrangements for Eugene to stay with the family of Francisco Rodríguez, who was known throughout the neighborhood as Don Chico. His farm, about two miles down the
valley from Selva Alegre, stretched from the river bottom back
into the hills, on which a considerable tract of the original
forest remained. Edwin thought it proper to let his brother
take Eugene to Don Chico’s place, since the whole plan was
Harold’s, and Edwin wished to have as little as possible to
do with it. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the day after
Eugene’s arrival, Harold saddled the horses and took him and his
baggage to the Rodríguez farm.

Don Chico was not, like Alvira’s father, the son of an im-
poveryished upper-class family who had gone into the wilderness
to try to improve his circumstances. Don Chico belonged to the
class of small proprietors, who worked their lands with their
own hands and those of their family, hiring labor only at the
busier seasons. One of the first settlers in the region, he had
prospered by industry and frugality, until in later life he had
accumulated a competence, and built himself a fairly large house,
all of unpainted boards. All his children had married and gone
to live elsewhere, with the exception of the youngest son, who
had brought his bride to dwell beneath the parental roof. So
far they had only a single child, a little boy of two. With their
family reduced to this small size, Don Chico and Doña Amanda, his
wife, could spare a room for the stranger, and were glad of this
source of income.

Eugene at once noticed the contrast between the comfort he
had enjoyed at Selva Alegre and his present accommodation. His
furnishings consisted of a home-made table, a four-legged stool,
and a hard wooden bed covered with a mat made of the dried midribe
of huge banana leaves. The Fernleys had lent him bedclothes, a washbowl and pitcher, and a kerosene lamp. His meals, as he soon discovered, consisted largely of boiled beans, rice, and tortillas, varied occasionally with cassava, fried plantain, or tiquisqui, and with plenty of strong coffee to wash it down. Although there was always as much as he could eat, he before long found this fare monotonous. He consoled himself with the reflection that he would not be here for long, and that many a natural-history collector had been forced to endure far harder conditions.

On the day after his arrival at Don Chico's farm, Eugene went out with his collecting gun to look for birds. His first shot brought down one of the most delicately beautiful birds that he had ever seen, a tiny honeycreeper clad in the loveliest shade of blue, with black wings and black patches on his back and throat. His second victim was an old acquaintance, a wintering chestnut-sided warbler, who had nearly completed the molt into the richly varied nuptial plumage which, if permitted to live, he would have worn on his northward migration in the following month. Whatever scruples Eugene may at first have felt against taking the lives of harmless creatures, however he might have shrunk from dooming to a painful lingering death those that escaped with wounds, these qualms were soon dissipated in the excitement of the chase. Although many of the birds that fell to his gun were plain, others were clad in the richest colors, often in a pattern so intricate that he could not appreciate it until he had taken the bird in his hand. He would tremble with antici-
pation as he picked up for closer examination some bird whose brilliance he had imperfectly seen through his gun sights in a high treetop. Birds were fast becoming to him merely rapidly moving bundles of feathers, whose sentient life, of which science knows nothing and only imaginative sympathy can surmise, he had neither time nor inclination to consider. And as the collection grew, so did the collector's fever, until he longed to have a complete representation of the valley's fascinating avifauna.

Edwin did not visit the Rodriguez farm. His chief motive for going would have been to recall Eugene to the ideals that he had abandoned and stop the slaughter, thereby renewing the strained bonds of their friendship. But he felt that the time was not yet ripe for this, so that a visit to Eugene at present would be both painful and fruitless. Although Edwin remained aloof, Harold, who felt responsible for Eugene's presence, often went to see if he needed anything, or to take him some delicacy which his mother or sister had made. He examined Eugene's specimens, admiring their bright colors, and sometimes accompanied him into the forest where he hunted birds. Before long, he wished to help with the collecting; but when he mentioned this to his family, they all, with one accord, raised such a storm of protest that he desisted. However, his visits to the Rodriguez farm continued. Doña Manda liked him, and often offered him a glass of milk or some freshly made tortillas.

One morning Violet made some chocolate cookies for Eugene, expecting that Harold would take them to him later in the day. But it turned out that Harold was needed on the farm that afternoon, and Violet decided to take them herself, as it was a pleas-
ent afternoon for a ride. As she was passing through a patch of woodland near the entrance to Don Chico's farm, she heard the report of a gun, so near that it startled her horse. Rounding a bend in the road, she came upon Eugene searching through the wayside herbage. Presently he picked up a small tanager, brightly clad in blue and green with a chestnut head. The wounded bird struggled wildly in the man's hand; but he pressed its chest hard between his thumb and fingers, so that it could not breathe; and in less than a minute it hung limply in his hand, killed by asphyxiation. He placed the dead body in a bag that hung from his shoulder, then looked up and noticed Violet for the first time.

Violet, who had watched the whole episode, had turned pale. She had intended to give Eugene the cookies as a present from herself, but now she said:

"Harold asked me to bring something for you. I shall leave it at the house."

Without waiting for a reply, she set her horse in motion and rode up the lane, leaving him standing surprised in the roadway.

"How could he?" she kept repeating to herself, "How could he do a thing like that?" Her gentle soul, sympathetic to all that lives and breathes, was shocked to the core by the sight of her brother's friend squeezing the life out of a beautiful, defenseless bird. She had not known just what bird collecting involved. Killing is one of those realities which the mind cannot adequately conceive, hence to witness it moves the sensitive spirit far more strongly than merely to talk of it. "How could he?" Now to the strong attraction that she felt toward Eugene was added an
equally strong repulsion. Her feelings about him had become so mixed that it would take her a long while to disentangle them. She left the cookies for him with Doña Amanda and started homeward, hoping that she would not see him again.

Eugene was no longer in the lane that led from Don Chico's house to the highway. As Violet rode along it, a flycatcher with a yellow breast fluttered ahead of her, unable to fly. Dismounting, she easily overtook and caught the injured bird. The end of its left wing hung limply from the wrist joint; evidently Eugene had wounded the bird but failed to retrieve it. With a pang of distress, Violet carefully wrapped the poor creature in her handkerchief and placed it in the bag in which she had brought the cookies.

How much more satisfactory, she thought as she rode homeward, was the way they lived with birds at Selva Alegre. Long ago, her father had attached a board to a tree close by the house; and by placing bananas or ripe plantains on it daily, they had attracted more than twenty kinds of birds, including most of the brilliant tanagers that inhabited the valley, and all of the little, gem-like, sharp-billed honeycreepers. At the height of the rainy season, when berries were scarce in the forest and thickets, the board presented an ever-shifting pattern of the brightest colors, while other would-be diners awaited their turn on the neighboring branches. Later, toward the end of the year, one of the most exciting visitors of all would sometimes arrive, a rather stout, dull green bird with a pointed yellow bill and a bright red head bordered behind by a white line. Returning again and again, it stuffed itself with bananas as few other visitors did. The Fernleys could find nothing about this strange bird in their books; the red-headed barbet they could not even guess to what family it belonged.

Then there was the little bicolored antbird who followed them through the woodland. One day Edwin had stopped to examine a fern that grew on a trailside bank. Looking up, he noticed a small bird clinging to the upright stem of a sapling, not two yards from him. It had rich chestnut-brown upper plumage, an irregular white band along the center of its breast and abdomen, and large, dark
eyes, each set in a patch of bright blue, featherless skin.
The bird stayed so close to Edwin that he surmised that he was keeping it from its eggs or young. While he searched fruitlessly through the surrounding vegetation, the brown bird remained close by. Convinced at last that there was no nest, Edwin began to walk away, and, to his surprise, the bird followed. He noticed that it was catching the insects which his passage stirred up from the dead leaves and other litter that covered the ground. As he continued to walk slowly, the antbird accompanied him for several hundred yards. It was one of the numerous kinds of forest-dwelling birds which attend the army ants, feeding upon the insects, spiders, and other small creatures which the swarming myriads of hunting ants drive out of the ground litter, where they are hard for the birds to find. Edwin was evidently serving the antbird in lieu of the army ants, by his footsteps stirring up its food from the forest floor and making it more readily available.

In the following months, Edwin repeatedly met the antbird in neighboring parts of the forest. It seemed always to be the same individual, whose acquaintance he now began systematically to cultivate. He also introduced the confiding bird to Violet. It would follow either one of them, or both together, through the woodland for an hour at a time, if they moved slowly, preferably dragging their feet to stir up the fallen leaves, or using a stick for the same purpose. The antbird flitted along from upright stem to upright stem, clinging to each a foot or so above the ground, to which it descended only briefly to snatch
up some edible creature that it espied. If its human friends delayed too long in one spot, the bird, clinging to a sapling a yard or two away, would utter a low, questioning note, as though asking why they did not move onward. It would permit them to touch it lightly with the end of a short stick, but never with a hand. This display of confidence by one of the free denizens of the woodland, generally so shy of man, was most gratifying to Violet and her brother.

As soon as she reached home, Violet showed the injured flycatcher to her parents and Edwin, and asked what could be done for it. When he saw how badly the wrist joint was shattered, Mr. Fernley shook his head. He doubted whether the bird would ever fly again; the shattered structure was too intricately delicate for their clumsy hands to repair. Still, they must do what they could, for their own sake no less than the bird's: to cast it out and let it die unattended, because its case was hopeless, would be too distressing to them. While Edwin held the bird, his mother took a narrow strip of bandage and bound the injured wing against the body, so that it no longer hung limply. They placed the invalid in a basket and offered it food and water, but it showed no interest in either. It would drink only when drops were placed on the end of its bill with a finger, and to make it eat it was necessary to force its mouth open and place a morsel of food inside. In the second night it died, futilely sacrificed in the name of science. The species that it represented had been known to ornithologists for a century.
Chapter 15
THE REVOLUTION

San Isidro

Early in March the impending storm broke. Utzäh, the isolated backwoods village unknown to history, was --of all places! -- where the revolution began. Attacking by surprise, the insurgents shot the jefe político or local head of government, rounded up and imprisoned all the Communists and staunch adherents of the Government that they could catch, and seized the airfield. Then, with the airplanes of a commercial air transport company friendly to the revolution, they flew in arms and ammunition from Guatemala, which supported the revolutionary cause. The insurgents enlisted the local men, thrusting rifles into the hands of those who were reluctant to serve and telling them they must fight to save their country from tyranny.

Preparing for a counter-attack, they dug trenches along two sides of the village's central plaza. When Mr. Fernley saw these trenches, dug not straight but in zigzags that would prevent an enemy from raking their whole length with gunfire, they reminded him of his service in France long ago. He wondered who in this usually peaceful country knew so much about trench warfare. The puzzle was solved when he learned that the local padre, who had fought in von Hindenburg's army and bore a shrapnel scar on his nose, had directed the digging of the trenches and even picked up a shovel to help.
Soon the expected counter-attack came. At Selva Alegre they could hear the noise of distant rifle fire, and the louder sound of exploding bombs dropped on Santa Fe from commercial aircraft. The forces of the Government were repulsed with many casualties.

Don Mariano Trevana had been sceptical about the revolution. "Our people are long-suffering and not easily aroused to violence," he had said to Mr. Fernley. "The newspapers will be filled with wordy polemics against tyranny and corruption; terrific threats will be made; a few harmless shots will be fired; then we shall limp along as usual."

When the unexpected happened and the revolution became a bloody reality, Elvira's father was in a quandary. His wife and four younger daughters were in one part of the country; his farm and beloved eldest daughter in another; and between them there was fighting. Since communications were disrupted with the outbreak of hostilities, it would scarcely be possible to send word back and forth. As long as the war lasted, he would be worrying about his wife and daughters, and they would be wondering what had happened to him and Elvira. The situation would be intolerable. He must at all costs join and protect the village, and count on their help to get through to the center of the country, where he could pass unnoticed in the crowds.

But what could he do with Elvira? The journey to the Capital in time of civil strife would be not without danger to him, and he could not expose her to the risk. After talking it over, they
decided that the best would be for her to remain at Selva Alegre. She had often stayed there for days together and regarded the Fernleys' house as her second home. Since they were foreign residents with no political affiliation, they would not be considered enemies by either side in the conflict. Elvira would be safer there than anywhere else.

The father and daughter hastily made their preparations. Food and supplies of all sorts, other than what the farms yielded, would henceforth be hard to procure. They would take to Selva Alegre all the flour, white sugar, soap, oil, matches, and similar supplies that they happened to have in the house. Their valuables would also be safer there, so they laid out some of their most treasured possessions for transfer. Noticing the rifle which, as a dweller in the backwoods, he kept for the protection of his household, Don Mariano thought it might be useful to the Fernleys, along with such ammunition as he had. On his forthcoming journey, he would carry only his revolver, concealed beneath his clothes, and he wondered whether it might not be more prudent to leave that behind and travel as an unarmed noncombatant.

and Elvira

Late that same afternoon, Don Mariano arrived at Selva Alegre with an oxcartload of baggage. He turned over the household supplies to the Fernleys, at the same time telling them that, if they needed anything else which Santa Teresa could provide, they had only to ask his foreman, who had instructions to give them anything they requested, as far as possible. Then he commended his daughter to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Fernley.

"We shall take the same care of your daughter as of our own."
More than that no one can promise in times like these," said Mr. Fernley.

"More than that it would be unreasonable to ask," replied Don Mariano.

Everyone wished him a safe journey, and promised to look after his farm as well as they could. He promised to advise them of his safe arrival in San José, and send Elvira news of her mother and sisters, if he found a way to transmit a message. He shook hands all around, embraced his daughter tenderly, and turned away with tears in his eyes. Elvira was weeping. Who could tell when, or whether, father and daughter would ever meet again?

Now began an anxious time for everyone at Selva Alegre. Postal and telegraphic services had been interrupted with the outbreak of the revolution; day followed day with no news from Don Mariano or from Hazel Fernley's family on the central plateau, and of course none from abroad. Their chief intimation of what was happening beyond the narrow valley of the Aguas Claras came in the sound of distant shots, or the drone of a small airplane that was often accompanied by the explosion of bombs. The few San Isidro neighbors bold enough to visit Cuesta brought confusing reports of what was happening. The Fernleys and Elvira seemed to have returned to a primitive age, when modern methods of communication had not been invented, and all beyond the narrow confines of the tribal land was hostile territory.

Despite wars and revolutions, the work of the farms must be carried on; for if the neglect of agriculture led to wide-
spread starvation, wars and revolutions would be won in vain. The fertile riverside land which the Fernleys had chosen for this year's cornfield had already been cleared by cutting and burning—it was far too rocky to be plowed. Now in March was the time for sowing maize. The farm was short of labor, two of its employees having gone off to fight, so Edwin and Harold helped with the planting. Each was equipped with a long, stout pole, shod with iron at its lower end, and he carried the seed corn in a calabash tied around his waist. Opening a hole in the charred ground with the narrow iron blade, he dropped in five or six grains, covered them by pressing the earth together with a foot, then took two steps forward and repeated the operation. After the maize had been planted, they sowed a small field with upland rice.

Edwin also tried to advance his research, but in the warm, tense, worried days it was difficult to preserve the calm concentration which such work demands. He was glad to have the farm labor to occupy his mind and make him tired enough to sleep at night. The one compensation for the revolution was the constant presence of Elvira in his home. He and everyone else did their best to divert her thoughts from her absent family, whose fate remained unknown.

In early April, the reports which reached Solva Alegre became more alarming. After consolidating its force in San Isidro, the revolutionary army had marched off over the mountains toward the Capital, leaving the village without a garrison. Now the mercenary troops which the Government had sent against the revolutionists began to roam freely over the surrounding
country with their powerful firearms, plundering, burning and killing. The men responsible for this reign of terror had been recruited among the laborers on the great banana plantations down on the Pacific coast. Most were of Nicaraguan origin, and many had fled from their native land to escape punishment for crimes. The rumor went around the valley that these men, for the most part the very dregs of humanity, had been induced to serve the Government by the promise of ten colones per day and liberty to plunder and rape as much as they pleased; for the Government wished to punish the canton that had supported the revolution. Whether this rumor was true it was impossible to tell, but the Nicas or Mariachis, as the mercenaries were called, certainly acted as though it were true.

Neighbors of the Fernleys began to abandon their homes with their cattle, pigs, and whatever else they could carry. Retreating higher into the hills, the refugee family would invade the privacy of some long-suffering acquaintance. Others buried a chestful of their most treasured possessions, such as their Sunday clothes, their cheap jewelry, their newest pots and pans, and whatever other small items of value were not needed for their daily living. Still other neighbors entrusted their valuables to the Fernleys, who accepted them for safekeeping without any promise that they could preserve them if their house were raided. In the cabins still occupied, stubs of candles or kerosene flares flickered before images of the Virgin or of saints, burning irreplaceable fuel in an effort to enlist
supernatural protection from evil men. In the densest and most isolated part of the forest, Mr. Fernley directed the construction of a shelter, covered with boards, pieces of old roofing, an old tarpaulin, and other odds and ends that would help to shed water. Here the people of the farm could take refuge in the event of imminent danger, and valuables could be hidden. Another secluded spot was chosen for concealing the horses and cows.

These preparations had scarcely been completed when the "grapevine telegraph" brought word that armed pillagers were approaching Aguas Claras. In frenzied haste, Harold and Lalo led the animals to their place of concealment, while the rest of the household bustled around hiding precious possessions, here, there and everywhere. More of the neighbors scurried up into the mountains, and more boxes of valuables were hastily interred.

With preternatural slowness the burning sun ran its course through the sky, and the harassing day ended without the appearance of the marauders. Nor did they come on the following day. When danger seemed to have passed, the horses were returned to the pasture to graze. Because they were needed, or because it was feared that continued exposure to dampness would ruin them, articles that had been concealed were exhumed or brought out of hiding; and everyone breathed more freely. Then, a few days later, another report that the Nicas were coming caused a repetition of the whole nerve-racking business. Whether these false rumors were spread maliciously or originated in the hallucin-
ations of minds disordered by fear, nobody ever knew.

In the midst of the general anxiety and terror, at least one person in Aguas Claras was enjoying the revolution. After several farms in the neighborhood had been abandoned and even the semblance of law had vanished, Raul Garro, the professional marauder, could follow quite openly the occupation which had formerly been clandestine. Now it was no longer necessary to take roundabout routes, to creep through the bushes, to choose the twilight hour, to watch and listen for approaching footsteps, whenever he wished to fill his larder with the products of other men's toil. Now he could march openly into a deserted farm, cut a choice bunch of plantains, pull up a few stocks of cassava, pick as many as he wanted of the sweetest and juiciest pineapples, even fill his sack with corn from the unguarded granary, then walk freely along the deserted road with his plunder.

Raul loved this new regime of anarchy, because it gave him a new sense of freedom and dignity. Next to the satisfaction of his animal appetites, coarse and enormous, the maintenance of his dignity and the zealous defense of his rights were what chiefly occupied his cunning, twisted mind. It seems to be generally true that what men believe that others owe to them varies in inverse proportion to what they deserve; and in conformity with this rule, Garro, who contributed nothing to the world, held that to be supported by it was his inalienable right. Did not God place animals on this earth, did he not make plants grow, to feed Christians like Raul Garro? He was irked by the necessity
to pursue his profession of raider more or less clandestinely. It was still more humiliating, at times when marauding did not yield enough, to be obliged to go meekly to some neighbor's door, without five centimes in his pocket; and ask to buy plantains or cassava. Since they knew that they would be paid with a promise that would never be redeemed, they would sometimes give what he requested without charge, the sooner to be relieved of his ugly presence.

The worst affront that Raul's dignity had suffered in many months was given him by Don Guillermo Fernley and his son Edwin, the day that they deprived him of the monkey he had killed. Had it not belonged to him, since God had placed monkeys in the forest to provide men with flesh and remedies for their ailing livers, and he had shot it? And they had insulted him by offering to barter the dead monkey—which was not theirs, anyway—for his gun. Did they take him for a fool? The insult rankled and rankled, appearing the more enormous the more he turned it over in his mind. Not having much to think about, he brooded over it almost daily, with growing resentment. What made this insult particularly hard to bear was its source. That dirty foreigners, who did not belong to the Church and would surely roast in hell, should insult a man like him!

Lettine in the cattle to eat the Fernleys' banana plants, and several other small acts of reprisal, had given his resentment only temporary relief. He thirsted for some signal act of vengeance; but he was a coward; and having known more than one man to be carried off to prison for murder, housebreaking,
cattle-stealing, and the like, he was in normal times careful
to avoid flagrant violation of the law. The endless multiplicat-
on of small depredations, each in itself too petty to be sev-
erely punished, was safer, and in the long run more profitable.
But now that the law was in abeyance, he saw his opportunity.
What he now wished to do was so big that he could hardly accom-
plish it alone. Anyhow, it would be dangerous to do alone. He
knew that Don Guillerme had a rifle and was a deadly marksman.
Although for years Mr. Fernley had never shot anything except
an occasional snake that endangered the people on his farm or
the birds nesting in his garden, he usually hit the mark, so
that the word went around that he had a sure aim. One of the
few things he boasted about among his farm hands was his marks-
manship. The reputation which they spread through the neighbor-
hood helped safeguard himself and his family from unprovoked
attack.

When Raul Garro heard what the Micas were doing throughout
the district, his plan for revenge began to take more definite
shape. He had little reason to be afraid of the pillagers; his
few battered possessions would hardly tempt them. Moreover, he
was not a revolutionist but a loyal adherent of the Government,
in whose service they were risking their lives. For he knew that
the actute leader of the small Communist party supported the
Government, and he approved of Communism. From what he had heard
from neighbors scarcely better informed than himself, he thought
that Communism meant simply that land, cattle, and other property
would be taken from the rich and given to the poor, with no
strings attached to them. He knew nothing of state socialism and the strict regimentation of a modern Communist state, which would have been even harder for him to bear than for men accustomed to steady work.

No, Raul Garro had no reason to fear the Mica plunderers. They were, after all, kindred spirits. With their guns that went pop pop pop, and could fire as many shots in a minute as his muzzle-loader in an hour, he need not fear Don Guillermo's rifle. He would go look for them, and put them on to something that would be to their mutual advantage. As he thought of what he would do, his evil little pig eyes gleamed in anticipation.
Chapter 16

THE CAPTIVE

When the reign of terror began, Harold was instructed to invite Eugene to move to Selva Alegre. Even if he would not be much safer there, it might be comforting not to be exposed alone to the storm. But Eugene was eager to complete his collection. He had glimpsed, but failed to obtain, several birds that he coveted. After all, who would have a reason to molest him, a foreigner without knowledge of nor interest in the country’s political crisis, without money except the few colones that he kept for current expenses? His was a sanguine temperament, and never having been in great pain or trouble, it was difficult for him to imagine that anything of this sort could happen to him.

One morning, a few days after he had laughingly brushed aside Harold’s entreaty to return to Selva Alegre, Eugene was walking through a pasture beside a woodland when a small bird flew overhead, producing almost continuously a low, clear twitter or trill, pleasant to hear. The bird alighted on a high dead branch exposed to the sky. Eugene raised his gun and fired; the bird fluttered down into the pasture. When the man stooped to pick it up, it seemed that he had shot down a bit of the sky itself. How intense the blue of its glossy plumage! How rich the deep purple that formed patches on its throat and breast! It was Eugene's first turquoise cotingas, a splendid adult male. He had already secured a specimen of the grayish,
spotted female, without a trace of blue.

Around noon, Eugene returned to his quarters, well pleased with his morning's collecting. He ate the plain but substantial meal that Doña Amanda set before him, lay down on his hard bed to rest for half an hour, then arose and sat at his table to skin the birds that he had brought back, a tedious task that would occupy him for hours. As his deft fingers prepared the specimens, Eugene thought complacently of his professor's approval of the collection that he was making, and how it would enhance his reputation as an ornithologist.

Absorbed in his work, Eugene paid no attention to the barking of the house dog, a frequent sound. Nor did he notice three men approaching through the dooryard. One was tall and lean, with a little black mustache and across his sallow left cheek a long scar, evidently from a machete cut received in some drunken brawl. The second man was short and stocky, with coarse black hair that grew low over his temples, leaving scarcely any forehead, and a thin, bristly beard on his brown face. The third was our old acquaintance, Raul Garro, who even in this evil-looking company had easily the most brutal expression. The two strangers carried automatic guns, while Raul had somehow managed to replace his old muzzle-loader with a high-powered repeating rifle. Advancing silently from different sides, they converged upon the house.

"Hands up!" rang out in imperfect but understandable English.

With a jump, Gene straightened up and turned his head, to find himself looking into the muzzle of a gun, held by the tall, scar-faced man who blocked the doorway of his room. Slowly, as though automatically, his hands, stained with the blood of the
birds he had been skinning, went up above his head. He noticed the two other armed men peering into the room from behind the tall one.

"If you move, you are a dead man. We want your money."

Eugene had far too little to risk his life to save it. "In that suitcase, over against the wall," he said.

While the tall man kept Eugene covered with the gun, the squat, dark one opened the suitcase and rummaged through it until he found a wallet. Opening it, he counted the money, forty-five colonels in bills and some loose change. Most of Eugene's funds were in travellers' cheques, which he had left with the Fernleys for safekeeping.

"Where is the rest of your money? Don't fool with us, or you will be sorry," barked the tall man in his broken English.

"That's all I have," protested Eugene, still holding his hands aloft.

"You lie! All Americans are rich. Give us your money, or we will kill you."

"But I have no more," repeated Eugene in desperation.

"Tie him up! We'll make him tell us," said the squat man in Spanish.

"Find a rope!" commanded the tall one, still pointing his gun at Eugene.

Beneath a tree in the dooryard a calf was tethered. She was a beautiful little animal, with a bright pinkish brown coat, a white triangle on her forehead, and some white marks on her flanks. Sometimes as he strolled through the dooryard in the
evening, after his work was done, Eugene would pat her pretty head. It occurred to him that, since he shared her mother's milk, he was in a sense her foster brother. The calf had been tied up in the afternoon, so that the cow's milk could accumulate through the night. At milking-time next morning, she would be brought to her mother to start the flow of milk, and one teat would be left for her to suck. Then she would wander through the pasture with the cow throughout the forenoon.

At least, the calf would have assisted at the milking next morning, if the bandits had not come. Looking for a rope, Garro noticed her tethered beneath the tree with a length of rope that would serve admirably for tying up Eugene. By the chopping block where the firewood was cut, he found a stout billet. Picking it up, he gave the calf such a stunning blow on the head that she fell, quivering, to the ground. After a few repetitions of the blow, the calf lay motionless, blood streaming from her nostrils.

Garro untied the rope and took it into the house. While the tall man continued to cover Eugene with the gun, Garro and the squat man bound his hands behind him. With the other end of the rope, they tied his legs together. The rope was drawn so tight that it cut into his wrists and ankles. They laid him on the bed.

"Now will you tell us where your money is?" demanded the tall, scarfed man.

"You have it already. It's all I had."

"You must have more. You couldn't go home with so little. I haven't worked for the Fruit Company all these years without knowing that."
"I have a round-trip ticket."

"Where is your ticket?"

"I left it in the hotel in San José," said Eugene, lying. He had resolved that, whatever they did to him, he would not reveal that he had left his funds with the Fernleys. He must, as far as he was able, divert these monsters from them.

They searched the prostrate figure, removing a gold watch and a few trifles from his pockets.

"Now will you tell us?" demanded the tall man, brandishing a rifle butt menacingly above Eugene.

"I've told you."

The butt descended on Eugene's knees. He writhed with pain.

"Tell us where your money is!"

"I have told you."

The butt came down again, harder this time. Eugene writhed and groaned. Tears welled into his eyes. He bit his tongue, resolved neither to plead for mercy nor to tell.

"Leave him!" exclaimed the squat man. "He'll tell before we've finished with him. I'm hungry. Let's find something to eat."

At the back of the house was a small storeroom, filled with stacked ears of corn, tools, rolls of wire, saddles, ox-yokes, and all the miscellaneous equipment of a farm. Lifting Eugene by his shoulders and his aching legs, the three men carried him into the storeroom and dumped him rudely on the floor, in the midst of the clutter. They closed the only door, and the squat man snapped the padlock, which he had found hanging open in the staple.
"Where's the key?" asked the tall man.
"I don't know."
"Fool! How will we get him out?"
"We can tear off the lock," replied the squat man.

The three thieves then proceeded to ransack the house, breaking open the one wardrobe and two wooden chests that it contained and strewing everything over the floor. Beneath the mat on the hard wooden bed where Don Chico and Doña Amanda slept, the tall scarfed man found a small roll of paper money, which with an evil grimace he slipped into his pocket, without saying anything to the others. Disappointed in their search for something strong to drink, they became increasingly rough in their treatment of the few household furnishings; and Eugene, lying in the dimly lighted storeroom, heard the crash of breaking wood and the clatter of shattered china, mingled with foul curses that he did not understand.

Garro changed from the ill-smelling rags in which he had arrived into the shirt and trousers which Doña Amanda had just washed and neatly pressed for Eugene. The trousers were too long, and he rolled them up above his dirty ankles. Then he found a machete and went out into the yard, where he began to skin and hack up the calf that he had killed. Soon his clean new clothes were bespattered with blood.

On the fogón or open fireplace where Doña Amanda cooked, the other two men found a large pot of black beans, still warm, and a smaller one nearly full of freshly cooked rice. They built up the fire until it blazed, and when Garro came in
with the dripping remains of the calf, placed them over the flames to cook. The storeroom where Eugene lay was separated from the kitchen by a wooden partition that did not reach up to the roof. Neither room had a ceiling. The sun had already set; and in the gathering darkness, Eugene watched the flames from the open fireplace flickering on the underside of the roof tiles above him. The smell of smoke and roasting flesh reached him over the partition or through chinks in the wall. Although he had not eaten for hours, the odor, far from whetting his appetite, made him feel sick.

Before long, the daylight that reached the storeroom from beneath the eaves had faded away; and Eugene lay in a pit of darkness, relieved only by the dim reflection of the kitchen fire from the roof above him. The floor on which he was stretched seemed to grow harder and harder, as though it were turning from wood into steel. He tried to sit up, only to find that he was tied in such a manner that this was impossible. The rope which bound his limbs felt as though it were cutting through the flesh to the bone. He writhed, twisted and turned, trying to make himself more comfortable, or at least less painful, but in vain. Something large crawled over his face. Suddenly he remembered that scorpions longer than his middle finger lived in that storeroom, hiding in dark crevices by day and coming out at night to hunt cockroaches. Not knowing whether the animal on his face was a cockroach or its pursuer, he held his head very still, lest by disturbing a scorpion he incite it to sting him. The creature, whatever it was, walked up the bridge of his
nose, across his forehead and over his hair, after which he felt it no more.

Soon the disgusting sounds that reached Eugene through the partition told him that his captors were eating. From time to time, he heard the clatter of a bone cast on the floor. He could imagine how the three self-invited guests were fouling the kitchen, whose bare woodwork Doña Amanda kept so spotlessly clean with rough chumico leaves and much hard scrubbing. Since the arrival of his captors, he had seen or heard nothing of her or her husband, and he wondered what had happened to them.

For a while, the men ate ravenously, with hardly a word. After they had taken the edge off their hunger, they became more voluble. Eugene's knowledge of Spanish was still rudimentary; but even if he had acquired perfect command of the Castilian tongue as taught in the schools, much of what was now being said in rude patois would have been incomprehensible to him.

Only detached words and short phrases of the loud conversation that he heard conveyed a meaning to him, but these were enough to arouse his interest, and he listened more carefully.

"Foreigners...tomorrow...big house...Don Guillermo...kill...much money...fine clothes...three pretty girls...one for each...

(loud guffaws)...kill...burn...another big house...other women..." and so on, for many minutes.

At first, Eugene was puzzled by the reference to three pretty girls. He knew from Harold that Elvira had gone to stay at Selva Alegre, and then he recalled that the barefooted girl who helped
Mrs. Fernley was far from unattractive. So that's what they are planning to do! The thought of creatures like that laying their foul hands on a girl so gentle and pure as Violet, so gracious and lovely as Elvira, nauseated him. He must escape in time to warn those at Selva Alegre of their terrible peril. Summoning all his strength, he made a desperate effort to free his arms from the rope that bound them; but it only cut more deeply into his flesh. The squat man who had tied him up was accustomed to loading pack-mules, and he knew how to tie a knot that would hold.

After a time, Eugene's captors stopped talking. The fire in the kitchen died down and its light no longer flickered on the roof. For a while he heard the men shuffling around, then there was silence. Presently he heard one of them snoring. They seemed to have forgotten him. But what would they do to him in the morning? Would they renew the torture to make him divulge where his money was? There was now no reason not to reveal that he had left it at Selva Alegre, for they were going there anyhow and would ransack the house. Perhaps it would be best to tell them, for then they might release him, and maybe he could reach Selva Alegre ahead of them and warn the Fernleys. No! they probably would not be so naive. They would kill him when they had learned all they wanted from him. He must get free to warn the Fernleys. He writhed, twisting his arms and legs in an effort to loosen the rope, but in vain.

For what seemed an eternity, Eugene lay in the black store-room, on a floor that had ceased to be a passive substratum and
was actively assailing his tortured flesh. His hands and feet had lost all sensation; he feared they would become gangrenous. Vermin crawled over him, nibbling at the birds' blood that still stained his useless hands. He had developed a burning thirst. Death stared him in the face. From time to time he groaned aloud.

Outside in the quiet dooryard the still air was sweet with the fragrance of blossoming orange trees. A night bird called softly in the moonlight.
Chapter 17
THE COUNCIL OF WAR

When the Nicas began to terrorize the district, Don Chico's son took his wife and baby to the house of a sister who lived in a more isolated mountain valley. The young people urged their parents to come, too; but Don Chico refused to abandon the farm to which he had given his life, and Doña Amanda would not leave her husband.

On the afternoon when the raiders came to their farm, the old couple were sitting in their kitchen, sipping agua dulce, when their dog began to bark. Like most people exposed to the terror, they had become very jumpy; and at the first notes of the hound, Don Chico leapt up to look out. Through the fruit trees in the dooryard, he glimpsed a man, evidently a Nica, advancing with a gun. Seizing his own gun from the neighboring wall where it hung, he clapped his hand over his wife's mouth and pushed her out through the back door. Fifty feet behind the house began the coffee plantation, among whose close-set bushes they plunged without being seen. Then, leaving his wife well concealed amid the foliage with an admonition to be silent, Don Chico returned just far enough to view his house, without running much risk of being himself detected. In addition to the armed stranger whom he had first seen, he espied another man, also bearing a gun, whom he recognized as Raul Garro. The third pillager, approaching the house from the opposite side, escaped his notice.
After this reconnaissance, the old man returned to his wife. He led her deeper into the plantation, followed by their dog, who was growing fat on the carcasses of the birds that Eugenio Rivers skinned. When they had placed a good distance between themselves and the house, the old couple stopped to consider what they would do.

"They will ruin everything we have," wailed Doña Amanda. "They will kill the calf and all my chickens. They will break the dishes. They will steal the money. They will make the whole house like a pigpen, as they have done elsewhere. They will wear your clothes and tear up mine. They may even burn down the house, as they have done to many others. That foul Raul Garro, to whom we have been kind all these years, was just waiting for a time like this to ruin those whom he hates, because they work harder and have more than he does. They will take our cows. They won't leave us anything at all. They will..."

"We can't stop them now," said Don Chico, cutting short her lament. "I can't chase the two of them away with this old gun, when they have such powerful weapons. Besides, I have no ammunition, except the bullet that's in it; I couldn't delay to look for more. What we must do now is consider how to save ourselves."

"I suppose they have caught Don Eugenio. Maybe they have killed him already. Why couldn't we save him, too?" Doña Amanda had grown fond of her big, good-natured lodger, who complimented her cooking in Spanish that she only half understood.
"There wasn't time," her husband explained. "We just barely escaped ourselves. If we had called to him, they would have heard, and perhaps shot us."

"Where shall we go now?"

"I'm thinking that we should go up to the foreigners, and tell Harold what has happened to his friend. If he hasn't been killed already, maybe they can save him. They are powerful people. Anyhow, we can pass the night there. I'm sure that Don Beto will give us food and a place to sleep; and tomorrow we can go on to our daughter's house, which is so remote that we should be safe there. Oh, our poor home! Our unhappy farm! Our poor animals!"

The afternoon was far advanced when the old couple, trudging along with heavy hearts to the accompaniment of Doña Amanda's ceaseless laments, and avoiding as far as possible the main road, reached the house at Selva Alegre. The five Fernleys and Elvira gathered on the porch to hear Don Chico's none-too-intelligible account of what had happened. Beto and his family stood on the lawn, listening too. When the old man had finished, his over-wrought wife resumed her moaning, continuing until he silenced her.

"This is serious," said Mr. Fernley, looking very grave.

"If the Nicas are so near, and Garro is leading them, they will surely be here before long. We must consider how to defend ourselves."

"But first we must try to save Gene," interposed Harold.
"What do you suppose they have done to him?" asked Violet.

"According to what we have heard," said Beto, "when they catch somebody who they suppose has money, they tie him up, threaten and mistreat him, until he tells them where his money is. Then they may either murder him or let him go. Since Don Eugenio is an American, they imagine that he is very rich."

"H'mmm. Rivers left most of his funds here," remarked Mr. Fernley with growing concern.

"I'm sure he would not divulge that. He would do everything in his power to divert them from this house," Edwin said loyally.

"Certainly he would not willingly betray us. But no one can himself foretell how he, or anyone else will behave under intense torture," remarked Mr. Fernley.

"I'm sure they have caught Gene," said Harold. "He walks fast and would be here now if he had escaped them. We must try to rescue him. Who will help me?"

"I'll help you," said Edwin. "How shall we go about it."

"We must go under cover of darkness and try to discover where he is. Then maybe we can rescue him."

"What nonsense you boys are talking!" exclaimed Mrs. Fernley, alarmed. "Do you imagine that you are a commando? You have had absolutely no training in that sort of thing. The Government equipped those Nicas with the most powerful weapons, and they use them without mercy. There may be more of them than Don Chico saw. You must not expose yourselves to such terrible risks."

"Doña Hazel is right. It would be utter folly for you to go," Elvira said.
"But it's my duty to go," insisted Harold. "I took Gene there. Besides, he's my friend."

"I cannot see that it is your duty," replied his mother. "You took Eugene Rivers to a peaceful farmhouse, where he was in no danger, except perhaps from his own gun that he uses so freely against the poor birds. You could not foresee, much less prevent, this terrible invasion. When danger threatened, we begged Mr. Rivers to come here, and he stubbornly refused. Now he must bear the consequences of his stubbornness."

"Still, there is the duty of friendship," persisted Harold. "One must not abandon a friend the first time he makes a mistake in judgment."

"It seems to me, Harold, that your duty is to protect your home, your sister and your brother's fiancée, not to mention your parents," said Mrs. Fernley, her voice rising with excitement.

"The Mariaches won't come here before tomorrow," Harold explained. "They are probably drunk now, if they could find anything strong enough in Don Chico's house. Tomorrow we must defend our home. Tonight we may be able to save Gene. Then he can help us."

"I forbid you to go," declared Mrs. Fernley, with an air of finality.

"This is a serious matter," interposed Mr. Fernley at last. "To know one's duty is not always easy. I wish we could take a day or two to investigate this question, for then we would be
less likely to mistake our duty. But time presses. Go, boys, walk in the garden, each by himself, and consider calmly what is your duty to your friend and also to your family. Weigh carefully the risks you run. When you have reached a decision, return and tell us."

Harold and Edwin walked off in different directions.

"Please, Don Guillermo, don’t let them go," pleaded Elvira, when they were beyond hearing.

"It’s all Gene’s own fault," Violet declared. "He insisted on killing the birds, when he knew in his heart that it was wrong, and he stubbornly persisted even when we begged him to come here for his own safety."

The foregoing argument was carried on in English. Meanwhile Don Chico and Doña Amanda, chiefly the latter, continued in Spanish to relate their extraordinary adventure to Beto and his family.

Harold had already made up his mind, and, not being accustomed to deep reflection, he could think of no contrary arguments strong enough to alter his first impulsive decision. Edwin, more thoughtful, was sorely perplexed. Although his first impulse had been to rush to succor his unfortunate friend, the more he pondered the question, the more objections to this course occurred to him. Success in such a hazardous undertaking was at best uncertain, and if he were to be killed or seriously wounded, his family and his betrothed would be deprived of whatever support he might give them in their perilous situation. Did he not owe more to his mother and father, to his sister
and his fiancée, than to the friend who had so deeply dis-
appointed him? More lives than Eugene's were at stake, and it
seemed best for all those at Selva Alegre to stay together
in the face of the dreadful menace that hung over them. And
yet...to abandon a friend in extremity...even an estranged
friend...seemed an ignoble thing to do.

Harold was the first to return. "I've made up my mind,"
he announced.

"What is it?" all asked eagerly.

"It is my duty to try to save Gene now and to defend the
house tomorrow."

"Harold!" exclaimed his anguished mother.

"Well, boy," said his father, "if you believe that to be
your duty, you must do it. Otherwise you will lose your self-
respect. Here comes Edwin. Let's hear his decision."

"In regard to Gene," Edwin said, "the problem is too complex
to solve in ten minutes. Our friendship was based largely on
a shared attitude toward life; but despite all my pleading,
he abandoned the position that we had agreed to hold together.
By persisting in killing, he seems to have brought retribution
upon himself. Still, I would gladly rescue him, if I could;
but I think it doubtful that we can succeed against men so
well armed as the mercenaries sent here by the Government.
Long ago, I was taught not to risk life or limb without suffi-
cient reason. Certainly my first duty is to protect the people
in this house and farm, and our horses and other animals, which
those cutthroats will kill if they can. But if Harold, who took
Gene down there, thinks it his duty to try to rescue him, I shall not let my brother go alone."

"Harold has decided that he must go."

"We'll go together, then," said Edwin.

"That's settled," said Mr. Fernley. "My duty, as I see it, is to stay here and protect the people on the farm, otherwise I would go with you. The next business is to plan your campaign with foresight and care, else you will expose your lives in vain. Have you formed any plan for Gene's rescue?"

"I think," said Harold, "that three or four of us should steal into Don Chico's house in the dark, surprise those villains while they sleep, and pin them down, so that each will awake with a dagger at his breast. He will be threatened that the slightest resistance will cost him his life. Then we can tie them up as they have probably tied Gene, and bring him back with us. They did something like that in a story I was reading, and it worked."

"Perhaps in your story the situation was different, for I doubt whether you would succeed in the present instance," said Mr. Fernley after a little reflection. "In the first place, we don't know how many men you will have to deal with. Don Chico saw only two, but he made a hasty reconnaissance and he may have missed others. Then you may have to break open a barred door, which is difficult to accomplish in silence; and in any case, fumbling around in a dark house, you are likely to waken your adversaries before you have them in your power. Then we have no daggers, but only knives of various kinds, made for
purposes quite different from killing men. And if, waking to find themselves threatened with death, your terrified enemies were to resist violently, would you be able to plunge a knife into their flesh? We read that, in the late war, many trained soldiers failed to obey the order to fire upon the enemy advancing to destroy them, because, apparently, they were subconsciously inhibited by the commandment Thou shalt not kill ingrained in them from childhood. Such an inhibition would seem to operate more strongly against sticking a knife into a human body than against pulling a trigger at a distance from him, and I'm not sure that you could do it."

"I don't like the idea," said Edwin, "I think it would be better for as many of us as possible to go, with all the firearms we can lay our hands on, no matter what kind. Then we could surround the house, and at a prearranged signal, we would all fire into the air and shout as once, making all the noise we can. The bewildered Nicas, believing themselves to be surrounded by a superior force, would probably flee in terror, leaving Gene behind."

"Possibly they would," said Mr. Fernley. "But then again,
believing that they were surrounded and their escape cut off, they might fire back; and even if they shot blindly into the darkness, with so many bullets spattering around, some of the numerous noise-makers might be struck."

"How would you go about the rescue, Father?" asked Harold.

"The first question that we must try to answer," replied Mr. Fernley, "is Gene's present situation, if he is still alive. Don Chico," he continued, turning to the old man and changing his language, "is there any room in your house, or any outbuilding, which can be locked from the outside, where a man might be shut up?"

"Only the storeroom, señor. The door can be fastened with a padlock. Don Harold knows where it is."

"Do you happen to have the key?"

"No, señor, it is hanging behind the picture of the Virgin in the sala."

"That doesn't help us much. Could an active man enter or leave the storeroom without using the doorway?"
"There is a window that fastens on the inside; and one who is agile could climb over the wall, in the space beneath the eaves."

Everyone present understood that the window was closed with a solid wooden shutter rather than a sash with glass.

"Then, if Gene is held prisoner, he is doubtless tied up,"
Mr. Fernley concluded. "You boys must carry a sharp pocket knife to cut the ropes. Is there a ladder that would help to climb over the wall, Don Chico?"

"There is a short one under the house, beneath the front porch."

"The first thing, of course," continued Mr. Fernley, addressing his sons, "is to discover where Gene is. If tied, he may be in the storeroom, and he may be somewhere else. Since he has been bound so long, he will doubtless be in pain and awake, while his captors, especially if they have been drinking, will be sleeping soundly. Many people sleep more soundly before midnight than toward dawn, when they are rested. Accordingly, the early part of the night is the best time for a surprise attack, or to break into a house without being caught. That should help you. Have you considered from which side you will approach the house?"

"Through the coffee plantation should be best. That way you can get closest without being seen," replied Harold, who knew the place far better than his brother.

"Wear your darkest clothes. It might be well to blacken your
faces, which is easily done with a bit of charred cork. It would be well for each to take a flashlight in his pocket; but you must be very careful how you use them, for the light might betray you. And you had better take two horses."

"But Father," protested Edwin, "the horses are such big targets for the Nicas. It will be far easier to remain inconspicuous if we go on foot."

"Of course, you will not take the horses right up to the house. They should be left concealed, as near the house as they can safely be taken. Gene, or somebody else, may need them, coming back. Don Chico, what would be the best place to leave the horses while the boys rescue Don Eugenio?"

The old farmer thought a moment. "In the pasture above the coffee plantation," he said at last. "I shall go with the gentlemen and show them where to leave the horses."

"That will be fine. You take care of the horses. They should be kept ready to mount at a moment's notice."

"I want to go, too," said Amado. "Maybe I can help."

"Very well, Amado, possibly you can," Mr. Fernley agreed.

"And I," volunteered Lalo, his younger brother.

"Thank you, Lalo," said Mr. Fernley; "but I think that there are already enough. Too many may get in each other's way, and be more likely to get hurt. All four will go together to the spot where you leave the horses, in the pasture above the coffee plantation. Don Chico will stay with the horses, while the other three advance through the plantation. Two will remain hidden within the edge of the plantation, while one steals up to
the house to reconnoiter. Until he has made contact with Gene, you cannot plan the final stage of your operation. Do you follow?"

"Yes, Father," replied the boys.

"Shouldn't we take the rifles?" Harold asked.

"They will be in your way," said Mr. Fernley. "It would be folly to try to shoot it out with the Mariachis; their weapons are so much more powerful than ours, and they would be protected by the house. Your success depends on your remaining undetected. Silence and stealth is what you need. One more point, an important one that I almost forgot. Is there a dog at your house, Don Chico? It would not do to have him arouse the Ricas by his bark."

"Our only dog came with us."

"Be sure that he stays here. Please tie him up. And now I think that those who are going on the expedition had better eat a good supper. Is there something ready, Hazel?"

Mrs. Fernley went to the kitchen to get some supper for her sons and Don Chico. While she was dishing it up, Edwin and Harold prepared for their adventure. Amado went home to eat, and Beto went to catch and saddle two horses. Mr. Fernley and the two girls remained on the porch.

"Poor Edwin! he does not want to go," said Elvira, tears in her eyes. "He ought not to permit his reckless younger brother to force him into such a wild enterprise."

"Father, do you think Harold is braver than Edwin?" asked Violet, hoping for a negative reply.
"Edwin has more moral courage. He is not one of those
slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three,
as Lowell says. Harold fears to be different from everyone
else; he lacks the courage of his convictions. In this he is
much like Gene Rivers, who resembles him in many ways, although
he is more studious. Harold rushes into danger without thinking
much of the possible consequences. Edwin looks farther ahead
and vividly imagines the outcome, which makes him seem more
timid. The very warm and sympathetic imagination which makes
Edwin so careful not to hurt any creature also prompts him to
take good care of himself. That seems inevitable; it would be
illogical to shrink from inflicting pain on any being but ex-
clude oneself from the class of beings. What disgusts us is
somebody fearful of the slightest scratch on his own precious
skin, yet careless of how many other creatures he maims or
kills. Edwin is not like that; his tenderness extends to all;
and because he has universalized it, his timidity is his great-
est moral asset. Yet he is also brave; for bravery is not absence
of fear so much as the strength to conquer fear when there is
sufficient reason to expose oneself to danger. A man who fears
nothing is not brave so much as unimaginative, and a large
share of what passes for courage is simply lack of imagination.
It is far harder for Edwin to make this expedition than for
Harold, who probably regards it as a lark; but he is bravely
doing it all the same. I hope that no harm befalls any of them."

"Heaven forbid!" the girls exclaimed together.
"Harold says that Edwin loves himself too much. Do you think that is true, Don Guillermo?" asked Elvira.

"It is questionable whether anybody can love himself, or anything else, too much, if he does so intelligently. It is not the degree of one's love for self, but the disproportion between certain people's love for themselves and their love for others, that is displeasing and harmful. But it is almost equally injurious when one concentrates so much love on a wife or husband, or children, that none is left for others. Edwin does not have that defect. He loves himself, in the sense that he takes good care of himself and tries to make the most of his life; but he has an immense surplus of love for other beings, too, with the result that he does not selfishly exploit them for his own advantage."

Neither of the young men had much appetite for supper, —Harold, because he was too excited; Edwin, because he was too troubled and unhappy —and they were soon ready to depart. In the round of tender leave-takings, Edwin and Elvira kissed for the first time since they had agreed not to do so. The circumstances seemed to warrant the exception; it might, for all they knew, be their last kiss. Mr. Fernley embraced both his sons and wished them good luck. The four members of the commando with blackened faces set off as the sunset glow was fading from the west, leaving tearful eyes behind them.

None of those who remained ate much supper. Nobody would be able to sleep until the expedition returned. Mr. Fernley busied himself cleaning, oiling and loading the two rifles, his own
and Don Mariano's; while his wife, vainly trying to interest herself in a book, ever and again glanced at him reproachfully. The two young women comforted each other as best they could.
Chapter 18
THE RESCUE

"This is the real thing!" exclaimed Harold, as he rode off in the twilight. "This is what I call adventure, the kind you read about in books. What a grand old soldier Father is! He still knows how to plan a campaign down to the last detail. I'll bet he was one of the best officers in General Pershing's army."

Edwin was silent. He was thinking how his father hated the violence of war, how he and the women at home must be suffering with anxiety now. He was thinking, too, how dreadful it would be to lose a limb or an eye, and to have to go through all the rest of one's days in this maimed state. Edwin loved adventure, too, but his notion of what constitutes adventure was very different from Harold's. To Edwin, the highest, most exhilarating adventure was to make a fresh discovery in the realm of nature, or to conceive some novel and stimulating idea.

After the last glow of sunset faded from the clouds, a crescent moon lighted the way. The soft, high-pitched wahre of the paquaque sounded through the still air; and at intervals one of these Geoschrocks rose lightly from the road ahead of the travellers, the white patches on its dark wings and tail prominent in the moonlight. After drowsing all day beneath the thicketes, on brown fallen leaves with which their mottled plumage blended, they had ventured forth into the roadway and other open spaces to hawk for insects in the twilight. After the heat
of the day, the night air was soft and caressing; it was an
evening for a lovers' tryst rather than a rendezvous with
death.

Edwin offered his horse to Don Chico; but the old farmer,
declaring that he was not tired, insisted on walking. The
four men spoke scarcely a word as they proceeded down the
stony riverside road, with the shrunken torrent murmuring
beside them. Before they reached the gateway to Don Chico's
farm, he turned from the highway into a narrow path, which
ascended to the upper edge of his hillside pasture. Violating
the instinct of a thrifty farmer, he took the short machete
that he had borrowed from Beto and severed both strands of
his barbed wire fence, admitting the horses to the pasture
and preparing an avenue of retreat shorter and less exposed
than the roadway. When they reached the coffee plantation at
the lower side of the pasture, Edwin and Harold dismounted.
Leaving the horses in Don Chico's care, they entered the
plantation with Amado.

Stimulated by a heavy shower nine days earlier, the coffee
had come that very morning into fullest bloom, which lasts but
a single day. Even in the moonlight, it was evident that the
slender leafy twigs were covered with white blossoms; and
traces of the delicate fragrance, which in the morning sun-
shine had pervaded the grove, lingered in the still air. Edwin
loved to loiter in a flowering plantation, enjoying its beauty and watching the hummingbirds poise before the blossoms, which they shared with a host of murmurous insects; but now the rows of glossy-leaved shrubs sleeping in their nuptial array failed to uplift him. Great fireflies, aglow with three distinct lights, wove erratic courses through the plantation, as the three young men passed silently between the coffee bushes, fervently hoping that they would tread on no venomous snake on its evening prowl. At the farther side, they came in view of the house and stopped in the shadows to reconnoiter.

Through the kitchen's open doorway, they could see two men seated at the table in the flickering firelight, picking the bones of the slaughtered calf. The third was hidden from them by the wall. They could hear the men's speech and bursts of rude laughter, but they were too far off to follow the conversation. Harold thought that, if he had a rifle, he might have picked off these two villains; but lacking practice in night shooting, he would probably have missed and succeeded only in stirring up a hornets' nest. Presently a tall man came to the doorway and looked out into the night, his form silhouetted darkly against the firelight. The watchers in the plantation shrank back into the shadows of the bushes, scarcely daring to breathe. Suspecting nothing, the man presently turned back into the kitchen and closed the door. Before long, the house became silent, and the firelight slowly faded from the cracks between the boards of the kitchen wall.

In whispered conference, Edwin and Harold decided that they should wait about an hour, until the moon had set and the tired
men had sunk into their soundest slumber. The younger brother insisted on going first to try to locate Eugene, since he alone was familiar with the house. With incredible slowness, the minutes of waiting crept by. Harold could think of only the coming adventure; but Edwin's thoughts reverted again and again to those at home and how anxious they must be, to his betrothed, and to his beloved research that he hoped some day to publish. Would a bullet from within the silent house put an untimely end to all his hopes? Amado, feeling safe so long as his companions showed no sign of nervousness, patiently awaited their next move.

At last the setting moon could no longer be glimpsed through the foliage of the plantation, and the shadows cast on the dooryard by the fruit trees had coalesced into an unbroken expanse of darkness. The stars still twinkled overhead, alternately bright and dull. The hour for action had arrived!

Harold stole forth from amid the coffee bushes. Keeping as much as possible beneath the trees to avoid being visible in the starlight, he advanced to the outer wall of the storeroom. Pressing himself against the side of the house, he listened. At first he heard only the chirring of insects amid the foliage and the sharp notes of some nocturnal animal that he did not know. Then he distinguished snoring, evidently from another part of the house. After a while, he heard a low moan, sounding closer at hand. His heart beat faster. He waited. After what seemed an age, the groan was repeated, and there came a grating sound, as though of someone trying to shift his position on a wooden floor.
"Gene!" he whispered. "Speak softly! This is Harold. Can you move?"

"No, I'm bound hand and foot."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes, but there are three fiends sleeping in other parts of the house."

"Wait!"

Harold knew that the storeroom opened on the little back porch, so he went around the corner of the house to try the door. It was locked; and the key, as he remembered, was hanging behind the image of the Virgin in the sala at the front of the house—if the Nicas had not already taken it. To search for the key in the dark house would be far too dangerous. Likewise, to take the ladder from beneath the front porch, with the risk of making a noise, was a procedure that he would, if possible, avoid. But he recalled that a light bench usually stood on the back porch, against the wall. By feeling he promptly found it, and, with great care not to bump into anything, carried it around to the opposite side of the storeroom and set it beneath the window. From the bench he climbed on the window sill, from which his uplifted hands could reach the top of the low wall. The strong, agile boy had no difficulty raising his body to the top of the wall. But the space beneath the eaves was narrow and he could barely squeeze through, taking great care not to shift the tiles above him, and thinking that if he could not open the window from the inside, Eugene might be unable to escape. Then, with infinite care to make no noise, Harold lowered
himself into the storeroom.

Feeling for Eugene in the blackness, he struck his hand against a roll of barbed wire and pricked a finger. Next he touched something that moved—a cockroach, perhaps. Finally, his hand made contact with the prisoner's feet. He felt the rope tightly bound around the ankles, removed the penknife from his pocket, and proceeded to sever the cordage, taking care not to cut the flesh of the unseen legs. Eugene gave a low sigh of relief as his bonds fell off. Then Harold cut the knots which held the captive's wrists together. Eugene was free, but his limbs were so stiff from long confinement that it was both difficult and painful to move them.

Still feeling in the darkness, Harold discovered that the solid wooden shutter that closed the window space was locked only by means of a bit of board that revolved on a nail. Eugene's captors had either overlooked the window or had placed such reliance on their prisoner's bonds that they deemed it superfluous to block this avenue of escape. Turning the wooden catch, Harold threw the window open, Eugene, who had risen to a sitting posture and was rubbing his ankles, could see the stars smiling at him through the trees.

Harold now helped Eugene to his feet. Although the window was small and rather high, he had no difficulty passing through it; but Eugene, half-crippled by his long confinement and the blows from the gunstock on his knees, required assistance. While Harold was helping him to lift his weight to the window sill, his imperfectly controlled leg upset some heavy object
that was resting against the wall beside the window. With a loud clatter that broke the silence of the night like a sudden explosion, it fell to the floor. Alarmed, Harold pulled Eugene rather roughly through the window.

After Harold left them to advance to the house, Edwin and Amado, standing behind the outermost bushes of the coffee plantation, watched and listened in tense silence. Amado was inwardly praying to the Virgin to preserve his friend from harm. Long minutes dragged by without bringing them any intimation of what was happening at the house. The sudden clatter made both jump. Ignorant of what had happened, or just where Harold was, they knew not what to do. Amado volunteered to go and investigate, but Edwin detained him; movement at this juncture might only increase everyone's peril. Straining their eyes through the darkness, they waited in an agony of uncertainty.

Although only a fraction of a minute had passed since they heard the noise, it seemed an age before they distinguished a shadowy bulk emerging from the denser darkness beneath a tree. Harold was advancing toward them, supporting Eugene, who could hardly walk. They were only four or five steps from the plantation's edge.

"Quick! We must get him away. I'm afraid we've aroused the Nicas," whispered Harold.

Edwin and Amado hurried forward to take Eugene from Harold. Before they could reach him, there was an outburst of firing, the shots spattering at random through the dooryard. With a long gasp, Harold staggered forward and Eugene fell with him.
The other two pulled them back among the bushes. More shots rang out, but the bullets did not seem to come close. Voices came from the house; then there was a loud noise, as of shattering wood. The brigands were breaking open the door to the store-room.

Stumbling, bumping into bushes, their faces whipped by slender twigs suddenly released by those who preceded them, Edwin and Amado somehow dragged their heavier companions through the dark plantation. Something that moved close to them made their hearts jump with alarm, but it was only a prowling opossum that scuttled out of their way. When at last they emerged into the pasture and let their burdens sink down on the grass, Don Chico and the horses were not there. For a horrible moment, Edwin suspected that Don Chico had left them in the lurch. They had come out in the wrong place, and it was some minutes before they found the old man in the darkness.

When at last he was satisfied that they were not being pursued, Edwin dared to switch on the flashlight that he carried in his pocket. To his horror, Harold's shirt was soaked with blood in front and behind, and on each side was a small round hole. A bullet had passed through his brother's body! Although Edwin knew the rudiments of first-aid, he had never learned what to do in a case like this; but he tore a clean handkerchief in two and did his best to stanch the wound. They helped Eugene to mount one of the horses, who fortunately was gentle. Then the three able-bodied men lifted Harold into the other saddle, where it was necessary to support him on either side.
He was conscious and in great pain. Slowly the little party moved up the hillside, bearing its casualties through the starry night.

When, toward midnight, they neared the house, Edwin went ahead to prepare his family for the arrival of the others. Those at home had heard the shots, which had sharpened their anxiety to the point where it was scarcely bearable. Now they knew that the expedition had been successful, but at what a price!

Let us, in tender and delicate feeling, avert our glance from the stricken family in its moment of sudden anguish. Those who have been similarly stricken will know how they felt; those who have been spared such a stunning blow can hardly be made to understand their feelings by any words of mine. Suffice it to say that the two casualties were washed and put to bed. Eugene, aside from his injured knees, had suffered only superficial abrasions and scratches, which stung smartly when painted with disinfectant but soon ceased to hurt. Edwin's wound was dressed at the surface, and to stave off infection he was given some tablets of sulphanilamide that happened to be in the medicine chest; but beyond this, nobody knew what to do for him.

Eugene lost no time in reporting what he had overheard while lying bound in the storeroom. It was no more than Mr. Fernley had expected. He had already made his plans for the morrow. He advised Edwin to go to bed and try to sleep, for there was work for him to do at dawn. Don Chico could help,
too, if he would.

Although Edwin was infinitely weary, his nerves were too overwrought for sleep. He could not dismiss from his mind the thought that in the next room, watched by his stricken mother, his brother lay severely, perhaps mortally, wounded, and that he, Edwin, was responsible for all this sorrow. It was true that Harold had been more eager than anyone else for Eugene to come, after it was known that he intended to collect birds, and had made all the arrangements for him to stay with the Rodríguez; but, after all, Edwin had introduced Eugene to the family, and the final decision that he could come had been Edwin’s own. This decision had been influenced by the prospect of recalling Eugene to his abandoned ideals; but already a month had passed, and he had killed hundreds of birds, yet Edwin had done nothing to stop the slaughter. He had hoped that the sight of the maimed and dying birds would itself move some spring in the depths of Eugene’s soul, arousing sympathies that slumbered, reanimating high resolves that had drooped. But evidently this had not happened, and Edwin had no new arguments that he had not repeatedly urged upon Eugene without success. Doubtless, if Eugene had not come to Costa Rica, he would have killed as many birds in Honduras; therefore, Edwin need not hold himself responsible for increasing the loss of life, which was a great consolation to him. But what right had he to sentence a certain number of birds in one country to death, so that a certain number in some other country might live? Such prerogatives belong to God alone, if there is a God who cares. All
this affliction, Edwin's anguished conscience told him, had fallen upon his family because he had deviated from his principles to help someone to pursue a course which he held to be wrong, no matter how many other people might call it right.

With this terrible self-accusation burning in his mind, Edwin at last sank into troubled sleep.
Chapter 19

THERMOPYLAE

Edwin seemed to have slept only a few minutes when he was aroused by his father, before the sky began to brighten above the eastern mountains. After a hasty breakfast, the two set forth down the valley with Don Chico, each carrying a gun. The party of defenders could not be larger, as no more firearms were available on the farm. On this dewy morning in early April, the birds were in fullest song, filling the valley with a many-voiced chorus, in which the liquid, flowing melody of the brown thrushes predominated. It seemed impossible that anything evil could happen on a day welcomed with such jubilation.

Half a mile below the Fernley's house, the foothills pushed in close to the Aguan Claras River, forming a small gorge through which it poured. At one point, the road up the valley, following the stream, skirted the foot of a verdant cliff about forty feet high. Here Mr. Fernley proposed to stop the brigands. Although the face of the cliff was difficult to scale, its summit was easily gained by a circuitous approach. Reaching the top, the three men ensconced themselves amid a dense growth of fork-fern, before the sun shot its earliest level beams across the valley. The roadway was deserted as far down the valley as they could see.

"This is our Thermopylae," Mr. Fernley remarked to his son. "Here we must try to stop the barbarians who have come to dea-
troy such civilization as we have achieved in this valley.
Let us hope that we shall be more successful than the brave
Spartans and Thebians under Leonidas; that no traitorous
Ephialtes leads the invaders past us by a detour. How fortunate
that you have had some practice shooting at targets! No matter
how greatly they loathe to kill, I have always held that men
who live in the wilderness, far from the police, should be able
to protect their families."

"How ironic destiny is!" exclaimed Edwin. "I came home ex-
pecting a peaceful time with my family and my studies, far
from the war-torn world, and here I am in the midst of con-
flict. I wish it were possible to stop those brigands without
shooting."

"Non-resistance to evil may prepare our souls for heaven,
but if it were to be widely practiced, this world would rapidly
degenerate into a hell. The man who loves righteousness and
justice will be almost as careful not to permit others to treat
him unjustly, as he is to avoid injustice to others. I need not
remind you what will be the consequences of letting those ruff-
ians slip past us. But if you are quite certain that you can
turn them back without shooting, let us say by moral force
alone, you may do so."

"I doubt that I could," Edwin said thoughtfully. "Perhaps
there is some sense of decency and justice lurking in the inmost
depths of even such a wretch as Raul Garro, and one who had
himself sufficient spiritual energy might suddenly awaken his
conscience and turn him from his evil designs. I do not feel
that my own spirit has yet developed to that high point. I wonder whether Gandhi himself could disarm those villains by non-violent means."

"I wish he were here to try it; it would be a sight worth seeing. He won his brilliant non-violent struggle for India's independence because he was contending with men whose own consciences had reached a fairly high stage of development, although not as high as his own. It was a matter of moral force contending with moral force, and the stronger moral force won. I am fairly certain that Gandhi's tactics would have been unavailing against rulers less enlightened and humane than the British, let us say against the Moguls who formerly ruled India, or against the Russian czars or the Russian Soviets."

"I think I see them coming," said Edwin, gazing intently down the road. "Yes, someone is approaching."

Three pedestrians rounded a bend in the road and came into view. They were walking in single file, openly in broad daylight, as though the valley belonged to them and there was nobody to oppose them. As they came nearer, their guns could be distinguished.

"You take the first, Edwin," Mr. Fernley instructed. "I will aim at the second, and Don Chico can take the third. Aim for their chests as soon as they enter the gorge, but do not fire until I give the command. We must all shoot together. If one of them escapes with his high-powered gun, he can give us much trouble."

Soon the three ruffians were close enough to distinguish
their faces. Raul Garro was leading, looking as though he owned the world. Next came a tall, sallow man with a scar on his left cheek, and last a squat, dark man. So confident were they that their march up the valley would not be opposed that they did not bother to look for ambuscades. Edwin watched their approach with tense nerves. He had never shot anything more like himself than a venomous snake. Now he was called upon to kill a man—an ugly, evil man, approaching with the most abominable intentions, but still a man like himself. He must not fail at the crucial moment. The safety of his mother, his sister, his betrothed, his wounded brother and his injured friend; the integrity of his home—everything depended on the sureness of his aim.

Now the three brigands were entering the gorge. Peering through the protective screen of fern, Edwin pointed his rifle at Raul Garro. At first he trembled so that he could not hold his weapon steady. By an effort of will, he controlled his limbs and kept the bead centered on Garro's chest.

"Fire!" came the low command from his father beside him.

Three shots rang out from the cliff top.

Garro and the tall, scar faced man lurched forward and fell in the roadway. With a scream, the squat, dark man dropped his gun, seized his right arm with his left hand, and started running down the road.

"Shall we stop him?" Edwin, ejecting the empty shell from his rifle, asked his father.

"Let the wretch go! Perhaps he has learned a lesson."
"It is fortunate you've been able to go to war," remarked Colonel Smith. "I saw 9 years of war, so I know how disturbed you were at the sight of these brigands lying dead on the roadway. But that was nothing compared to what one sees on a battlefield. Still with time, the soldier, if he does not close his eyes becomes hardened to that, as to everything else.

"As I looked at those men, two corpses so pitifully near death, I realized, and recalled what kind of men they were. I felt a kinship for the human body, including my own.

"It would be wrong to loathe the human form because some specimen of it is so despicable," Mr. Finchey pointed out. A human body is like a cup of water. The water has no strong character of its own, other than that of being a most versatile solvent. Drop a grain of salt in it and it becomes salty, drop a grain of sugar and it becomes sweet. According to what it dissolves, it can become a refreshing beverage, a healing potion, a deadly poison or a harmless liquid. The mind is to the body as the dissolving substances to the cup of water. Similarly, speech gives the whole organism its own color, its own character, makes it, in the care of good and kind people, a blessed thing, and contrarywise, in the care of dissolute, unwholesome men, the most abhorrent mass of organized matter that this earth supports.

"But if we have such a great capacity for goodness, why should some men become so horrible wicked?"
After assuring themselves that there was no danger of a shot from the two figures lying motionless in the roadway, the three defenders came down to them from the cliff. Their faces, ugly in life, were so repulsive now, fixed in the agony of death, that, after a hasty glance, Edwin averted his eyes from them and stood aloof. He had never in his life touched, or even come very near, a human corpse. Don Chico, to whom death was no stranger, proceeded to search the dead men's bloodstained clothes. From a pocket of the scar faced man, he extracted a roll of paper money and counted it. "This looks like mine," he muttered, slipping it into his own pocket.

They picked up the guns which the brigands had dropped and collected all the ammunition that the dead men had carried.

"With these weapons on that cliff top," said Mr. Fernley, "we should be able to defend ourselves against a whole company of such undisciplined freebooters. We must keep a guard posted there every day until the trouble is over. But first we must learn how to use these newfangled guns."

Don Chico, happy to have recovered his money, offered to return with Beto, Amado, and other men from the farm to bury the corpses, before the vultures attacked them.

"So I have killed a man!" Edwin mused as he walked homeward beside his father. "I have killed a man and, strangely enough, it does not trouble me as much as I had expected. I believe that I should be far more distressed if I had shot one of those songbirds that Gene has killed, for they were beautiful and innocent and add to the joy of the earth, while Garro did his best to make the world ugly and miserable. What troubles me is not that I killed Garro, but that the earth bears men so evil that one must kill them to preserve anything decent."

"You touch," said Mr. Fernley, "upon one of the greatest
of all philosophical problems, the origin of evil. Some philosophers have held that evil presents no greater problem than good, but I believe they are wrong. If we grant that there was any spiritual element, any slightest trace of sentience, in the primal universe, it would naturally strive for fuller self-realization, for greater joy or happiness or whatever you wish to call it—in other words, for greater good. For by goodness we mean satisfying states of consciousness and all that conduces to them, and without sentience there could be neither good nor evil. Everything that exists, or at least everything that exists with feeling, if these two classes are not coextensive, naturally strives for good; so that the problem of good seems to be no other than the problem why anything at all exists, which appears to be an insoluble problem. But evil presents a more advanced and complex problem, because we are called upon to discover why things which exist, and naturally strive for good, miss their way, so to speak, and become involved in the tremendous mass of evil—of strife and pain and ugliness and hatred and anguish and frustration—which this world contains."

"How do you account for evil, Father? I know you have thought a great deal about it."

"That is a question to be asked after a sleepless night, and such a morning's work as we have done. To be brief, I should say that evil exists primarily because the impulsion toward life—Bergson's *vital*—is too strong. There are too many
living things on this earth; they compete desperately with each other for nourishment and a place in the sun; they torture each other as parasites, and as predators devour each other whole. All the moral evils of hatred, rage, envy, vengefulness and fear grew up, through evolution, in this relentless struggle for existence. Those thinkers, such as the authors of Genesis, who derive physical evil from moral evil, put the cart before the horse; moral evil is a result of the physical evil of over-crowding in the living world. Life would be far sweeter and more pleasant if there were fewer living things to annoy and torture each other. I am convinced that there would be, at any one time, more joy, more positive value, in the world if there were fewer creatures to enjoy—and to suffer. As you know, according to one influential school, to maximize the absolute sum of joy, rather than the number of creatures among which it is distributed, is the proper goal of morality.

"All that I have been saying applies with special force to mankind. The earth is rapidly reaching the point—in many parts has long since passed the point—where to increase the number of people is simply to reduce the value of life to most individuals, to increase the amount of misery they must endure. If there are fewer people at one time, the earth may be able to support more in the long run, for its resources can be more effectively husbanded. And since we hope there will be better men in the future, it seems proper to keep the population in check now, so that the earth will be able to support the super-
ior future race — men devoid of hatred and malice, who will radiate love for all beings as the sun radiates light, who will appreciate everything good and beautiful as most of the cramped, impoverished souls who encumber the earth today are incapable of doing. But we must reserve all these high matters for discussion on some future occasion. Now I think we should hurry home and relieve the anxiety which I know everybody there is feeling."

Before he left the house in the morning, Mr. Fernley had advised his wife to take the girls to the retreat that had been prepared in the forest and remain hidden there until the outcome of the engagement at Thermopylae became known. In Harold's critical state, he could hardly be moved into the forest without imperiling his life; and his mother refused to leave him. Her husband pointed out, with the cold realism that their desperate situation seemed to demand, that since, in case of defeat, the women would not be able to save Harold from the brigands, the rational course would be to save themselves. Mrs. Fernley, however, still insisted on staying with her son. The girls, she said, should go into hiding without her. But Violet refused to abandon her mother, and Elvira would not leave Violet. So the three of them barricaded themselves in the house with Harold and Eugene, resolved to defend themselves with knives, and to die rather than submit to the freebooters. But nearly everybody else on the farm went into hiding.

After they heard the firing, the three women went again and
again to peep out, not knowing whether they would be approach-
ed by friend or foe. Half an hour after the volley, Violet
was peeping from a window when she saw her father coming with
Edwin and Don Chico, each bearing two guns, and all safe and
apparently sound. With a cry of delight, she apprised the
others and rushed out to greet the returning victors, followed
by Elvira and Mrs. Fernley. In incredibly short time, the word
went round that the immediate peril had passed, and those who
had vanished into the bush re-appeared. Even Harold's critical
condition could not quite dispel the relief and jubilation that
everyone felt. The three men who had held the pass of Thermopylae
were acclaimed as heroes. By their steadfast determination, they
had saved not only Selva Alegre but likewise Santa Teresa and
the smaller farms in the neighborhood, which without much doubt
would have been looted, and their buildings perhaps burned, if
the pillagers had not been stopped.
Chapter 20

DEATH OF A HERO

Mr. Fernley believed that with expert care Harold might be saved; in France, he had known soldiers to survive bullet wounds that were at least superficially similar. How to obtain this care was the perplexing problem. Nobody knew what had happened to the one doctor in the whole of El General. The nearest hospital was many miles away across high mountains. The roads were infested by merciless brigands, such as the two who had just been killed. The public services were completely disrupted. It would be necessary to transport the patient in a litter carried by a squad of men, and in times like this it would be difficult to enlist enough bearers. They talked over and over how Harold might be taken to a hospital, but every scheme that anyone could suggest seemed either too impractical or too dangerous for all concerned.

If loving care alone could have saved Harold, he would have promptly recovered. Medical skill and equipment were indispensable, and in their absence he failed to improve. Much of the time he lay in a lethargy, but there were intervals of great suffering and also times when he seemed to rally. His bedside was constantly attended, chiefly by his anguished mother, who at intervals was relieved by Violet or Elvira. Mr. Fernley and Edwin would have felt the situation as keenly as the women, if they had not been so occupied guarding the farm against another attack.
On the third afternoon after he was wounded, Harold opened his eyes and saw his pale mother sitting beside him. "Can't you save me, Mother?" he pleaded. "I'm very young to die. I have never seen anything of the world beyond this little country, or travelled on a steamship, or climbed a really high mountain, or been truly in love, not even with Elena. There are so many things I wished to do. Death is hideous. Nothing that lives wants to die -- I see that clearly now. O! why couldn't I understand that before, just from your telling me, as Edwin and Violet did? Why did I have to come to this, before I could see what others saw so much more readily? If I had known what I know now, I would not have been so eager to bring Gene here to shoot his birds, and I would not have been shot myself. Now that I know, I want to live, so that I can be guided by my knowledge. Can't they save me, Mother?"

Mrs. Fernley gazed tenderly at her son's head lying on the white pillow. With his broad white forehead, his well-defined dark eyebrows, his large brown eyes softened by pain, his regular nose, firm mouth and strong chin, he appeared handsome to her. That so fine a face should so soon decay! To prevent his seeing the tears that welled into her eyes, she hastily arose, saying: "Don't talk about death, child. We are doing all we can to make you better. I must get you something now." She went into the next room, fumbled in the medicine chest, found a lotion and, when she could control her tears, returned and rubbed his temples with it, in an unavailing gesture of love and despair.
In another lucid interval, Harold spoke of his childhood:

"Everybody was so good to me. We three children had such happy times together, before Edwin went away. He was always so kind to his little brother. I remember once when he was sent on an errand, while I was still very small, and I insisted on going with him. He said that it was too far for me to walk and I would get too tired. But I made such a fuss that he finally consented to take me. I did get tired, and he carried me much of the way home, although I was heavy and he was not very big himself, even if he did seem so to me then. He would lend me his horse, before I had one of my own, and I would bring him back panting and sweaty from riding hard. Edwin would say that he would never let me ride Callip again, because I did not know how to treat a horse. I would promise not to go so fast next time; and after a while Edwin would relent and lend me Callip again; and the same thing would happen. I was too fond of speed. Edwin was too good to me; I did not appreciate him enough. No, I did not sufficiently appreciate you or Father or Violet, either. I was too headstrong."

Such intervals of lucidity became rarer. Sitting for seemingly endless hours at the bedside of her mortally wounded son, Mrs. Fernley reflected how tragic is the wide borderland between waking and sleeping, between life and death. Much needless suffering might be avoided if God, or nature, had established sharper boundaries between these contrasting states: so that we should be either wide awake, enjoying the fullest use of our mental and physical powers, or else sound asleep, restoring
them; so that, when a sick or wounded organism had passed the point of no recovery, merciful death would promptly supervene. Then we would be spared long hours of hateful insomnia, when we can neither think to any purpose nor avoid disturbing thoughts. Then countless men and animals would be spared a long-drawn-out death agony, without a final reprieve that might release the spirit in joy from its fleshly abode. Life should be wholly life, alert and joyous; death should be wholly death, still and unperturbed. The mixture of these two incompatible states, in a wide borderland that joins yet separates them, cannot be otherwise than hateful.

In the fourth night, Harold died.

For whom is death most tragic? For the infant who has not yet tasted life's joys and sorrows? For the child who in a loving home dwells in the delightful realm of fancy, still unscathed by the world's harsh realities? For the youth who feels his powers growing daily stronger and longs to prove them in life's stern contest? For one at life's prime, bearing his burdens, working out his destiny? For one to whom long years have brought knowledge, wisdom, and sympathy?

Death is equally tragic at any age—so tragic that scarcely anyone can face it in its stark nakedness, and moralists have felt it incumbent on them to bolster up our courage—and their own,—by proving with unconvincing arguments that it is far less tragic than it seems. But one who has the courage to gaze steadfastly in its dreadful face, and in unswerving truth assess all that it involves, will not be deceived by sophistries. To
lose one's eyesight, to lose one's hearing, to lose a limb, to lose memory, to lose reason, to lose family or friends, to lose home and property — each of these losses, singly and alone, is commonly considered a tragedy. But to die is to suffer all these losses together, and a great many more: how can the whole be less tragic than any one of the details that it involves?

There are, no doubt, occasions when we regard death as a blessed release, as when it comes to one who has long suffered severely with no prospect of improvement, or to one whose mental and bodily powers are already far advanced in senile decay. But senescence itself is part of the whole process of dying, and the final expiration only its critical point; so that senescence and death together must be regarded as a single tragedy — life's great failure and misfortune. To hold that death is no evil is to disparage life, to be deficient in gratitude for the boon of living in a wondrously beautiful world. Only on the assumption that death is not what it seems, but a passage to some larger life, is it possible to view death as other than tragic.

Courage is not self-deception; the brave man is not devoid of fear but overcomes his fear under the influence of reason. Since we cannot circumvent our inevitable dissolution, we must steel ourselves to face it courageously, neither embittering the closing years of our lives, nor distressing those around us, with moans and complaints. To feel the full intensity of the tragedy which confronts us, yet meet it calmly and even
cheerfully, requires a far higher courage, a much nobler mind, than to prepare oneself for death by arguing, against one's better judgment, that the extinction of self-conscious existence is no great loss. Hatred and dread of death, when courageously controlled, is not unbecoming in those who dread it absolutely for other beings of every kind no less than for themselves. Dread of death is contemptible in those who shun it for themselves alone.

Death is a phenomenon of advancing life. The simplest organisms, which multiply by fission, are potentially immortal; for the whole substance of one generation passes into the succeeding generation, and no essential portion of the one-celled creature is excluded from the continuing stream of life. Multicellular plants and animals, which reproduce by only a part of themselves, grow old and die. Their death is indispensable for evolutionary advance, for thereby they make room for successors who may be more perfect than themselves, or at least better adapted to a changing environment. Could life ever reach the highest point that it is capable of attaining, so that no further advance were possible, death would lose its biological significance; for there would be no advantage in replacing one generation by another which was not even potentially superior. This generation which could not be surpassed, within the limits imposed by organic life, would, I take it, be that in which understanding, appreciation and love attained their maximum. The individuals who composed it would enjoy all lovely things with an intensity we can hardly conceive, and they would be
infinitely compassionate of all the lower forms of existence, which are steps on the long and hazardous road leading to themselves. Not only would the members of this ultimate generation have a great capacity to love, but likewise to inspire love in their fellows; lovingness and loveliness would simultaneously reach their maximum, and to love one's neighbor as oneself would be as natural as to breathe.

And so, at the age of nineteen, Harold Fernley paid the penalty of our human imperfection, which was at the same time the price of his heroic rescue of his friend. Never before had the Fernley family known such grief as now overcame them. Since its oldest member was still only in his middle fifties, hale and vigorous, they had thought far less about death than about life. Now they were forced to consider where they would be buried. In a hurried conference, they decided to make the cemetery on a hilltop that overlooked the valley and the whole sweep of lofty mountains in the north—the same hilltop near the house where the vanished Indians had long ago buried their dead. Mr. Fernley wished to inter his son in only a shroud. He found no more comfort in thinking of the corpse lying in a box than lying in contact with the fecund earth; and he believed that the elements which have supported our organic life should be free to enter as quickly as possible into other living bodies, thereby contributing as much as possible to the realm of life and, for all we know, achieving the maximum amount of satisfaction for themselves. What more barren fate could befall an atom than to be locked up for ages in a dead body? But in spite
of her husband's philosophizing. Mrs. Fernley was so distressed by the idea of her boy's being placed directly in the ground that he relented. He and Edwin hastily put together a casket with such boards as they could find, while Beto and his sons went to dig a grave in the selected spot.

The simple funeral was attended only by the Fernleys, Elvira, and such employees of the farm as had not fled or gone to fight in the revolution. It was performed in a military atmosphere, for Mr. Fernley and Edwin now never left the house without the guns they had captured. After the rough coffin was lowered into the ground, all the mourners strewn it with flowers mingled with their tears. There was no funeral service; but Mr. Fernley directed that those who could pray should do so, while those who could not should recall the virtues and good deeds of the deceased. What more fitting way of honoring the dead could they find?

It was the wrong kind of day for a funeral, which should be held on a dull and dreary afternoon, when nature seems to weep with the mourners, and the external gloom, reinforcing the inward sorrow, makes the world seem so sad a place that we could leave it without regret. But Harold was buried on one of those sparkling mornings that are frequent as the dry season gives way to the wet. A few showers had already cleared the atmosphere of smoke and dust, freshened the air, and tinged even the thin hillside pastures with a spreading mist of green. The sun shone brilliantly in a sky of tender blue. At the edge of the neighboring forest, the jacaranda trees displayed the
last of their violet-blue flowers on their shapely convex crowns, raised above every other tree on slender gray trunks. On the surrounding hills, the mayo trees were spreading their golden blossoms over their dark green, glossy foliage. The birds were singing gaily, and colorful butterflies flapped lazily from flower to flower. The beauty of the day underscored the poignancy of death. To be precipitated from such a world by an assassin's bullet, at so early an age! This was the thought, felt rather than expressed, that made the passing of the son and brother seem so cruel.

Edwin reflected that, but for chance, he might have been the one whose eyes would never again see colors, whose ears would forever be deaf to melodies, whose brain would never think another thought. The bullets that spattered all around them might have struck him or Amado or Eugene as well as Harold. He was thankful that it was not he who was being lowered into the dark earth. And the next moment, he was ashamed of the thought.

As they were retiring that night, Mrs. Fernley confided to her husband that she would feel less afflicted if she were sure that Harold's soul survived his body.

"Although Harold was sometimes difficult to manage, he was not a bad boy," said Mr. Fernley. "He was courageous, generous, loyal and helpful. He made friends more readily than Edwin, who is more thoughtful and reserved. Parents whose conventional moral code is circumscribed around mankind and who expect less of their children than we do, may well have been proud of such
a son. We were distressed because he did not respond, as Edwin and Violet did, to our effort to expand his sympathy to embrace all living things. It seems that his abundant vitality so filled his mind that it left no room for imaginative participation in lives that differed much from his own. He lived so intensely in his own flesh that he could not learn to live in the flesh of others. He saw only the outside of the animals that surrounded him, hence treated them as objects rather than as fellow creatures. As I said more than once, he needed toning down, chastening, to make him thoughtful and expand his sympathies. The chastening came— but too severely and too late."

"But do you believe that his spirit still lives on?"
persisted Mrs. Fernley.

"There is no generally accepted scientific proof either that it does or does not. Let us, then, have faith that it does, passing through successive stages, in which it will be purified of its present defects, and becoming at last worthy of eternal life."
Chapter 21

EUGENE'S REMORSE

Eugene Rivers' legs were still too painful for him to climb up the hill for Harold's interment. While the others were burying the fallen hero, he stayed in the house, alone with thoughts that distressed him even more than his injured limbs. But for him, Harold would still be alive. He felt, in an agony of self-reproach, that he was doubly responsible for the boy's death. If he had heeded their suggestion to move to Selva Alegre when the mercenaries began to terrorize the district, or better, if he had taken to heart his friend's entreaty not to shoot the birds, he would not have been captured. Although he had been caught and tortured through his own fault, Harold and Edwin had, with courage that was exceeded only by their magnanimity, come to save him; and the rescue would have been effected without a casualty but for his clumsiness in upsetting something in the dark storeroom, with a leg over which he had imperfect control. The noise he then inadvertently made was the immediate cause of Harold's death.

How must the bereaved family feel toward him, whom they had reluctantly permitted to come for a purpose they did not approve? What could he say to make them understand the full measure of his sympathy, sorrow and remorse? He rummaged in his mind for words, for a little speech to make when they returned from the hilltop; but everything that occurred to him seemed too pitifully inadequate for the occasion. How they must loathe him! How pain-
ful his presence must be to them! How he wished it were possible to betake himself elsewhere that very instant! He, rather than Harold, should be the one to be buried today, if divine justice excluded all chance from human affairs.

At his first opportunity to speak to Edwin alone, he tried, fumbling for words, to express his feeling of sorrow and guilt, and begged his friend to convey to the parents what he felt unable to communicate directly to them.

"If it is wrong to accuse others unjustly," expostulated Edwin, "it must likewise be wrong to accuse oneself unjustly. Possibly, like everyone else, you have things for which to blame yourself; but Harold's death cannot be included among them, for nothing was farther from your intention. You did not bring the Nicas here; you did not even ask us to come and rescue you. It might have gone worse with us if you had not been staying with Don Chico. Raul Garro, who led the thugs to you, hated us, and doubtless he wished to injure you because of your connection with us. While torturing and murdering us, as he evidently intended to do, he could boast of what he had already done to our friend. If he had not stopped off to visit you on his way to Selva Alegre, he might have come directly, taking us by surprise, and perhaps doing far more harm than he did. So we have reason to be grateful to you."

"You are most generous to look at it that way. Still, I cannot help feeling that my presence must be painful to your family. Perhaps, even, they hate me. As soon as it is possible to travel, I shall relieve you of my presence."
"No, we do not hate you, Gene. On the contrary, we are sorry for you, and shall do everything in our power to make you well. Next to Harold, you have suffered more than any of us; and your suffering is not yet over, as his is. As to your going, would it not be unkind to deprive us so soon of what Harold gave his life to save?"

Edwin's speech relieved Eugene of the uncomfortable feeling that his presence at Selva Alegre was objectionable, but it could not free him of self-reproaches. Although jurists and moralists may exonerate a man from consequences of his acts which he did not intend and could not have foreseen, an exacting conscience is not so easily pacified. However, much cold reason may persuade us that the course of events is determined by natural causation, acting in part through that unpredictable concatenation of circumstances which we call "chance," it is difficult for the moral man to divest himself of the feeling that there is, beyond all natural causation, a moral connection between his voluntary acts and their remotest consequences. If he had not done this, that would not have happened. The morally sensitive man often has this feeling when the this, the first step in a series of events that leads to a tragic result, is wholly beyond reproach. But Eugene Rivera was now beginning to doubt that his first step in the sequence that culminated in Harold's death was blameless. If he had resisted the pressure which his professor had put upon him to collect birds, Harold might still be alive.
Eugene's knee-joints gradually recovered from the effects of the cruel blows with the gunstock, but meanwhile a complication had arisen. An abrasion on his ankle had become infected, producing a spreading, scab-like, dry sore that was painful. Before long, a similar infection broke out higher on his legs, then another and another, still higher on his body. Such sores were not uncommon among the local people, who called them "Grains"; and Mrs. Fernley attributed them to a diet deficient in fruits and green vegetables.

The diet of the whole household at Selva Alegre had, in fact, long been deficient, because, since the revolution began a month earlier, it had been impossible to procure fresh supplies. With a granary still well stocked with corn, rice and beans, with bananas and cassava growing in the plantation, nobody was in immediate danger of starvation; but now at the end of the dry season, green vegetables were lacking. Usually at this time of year they were brought down from the highlands, where the cooler climate is more favorable for their growth; but this traffic had been interrupted. As fate would have it, the orange trees, which often yielded their golden spheres throughout the twelve months, were this year barren at just the time when their fruit was most wanted. Mangos, avocados and other kinds of fruit trees, which had flowered in the dry weather, still bore only the promise of their bounty. It was scarcely possible to give the patient the kind of diet that his case required, and he failed to improve.

As the ugly, painful sores spread over Eugene's body, he
became increasingly apprehensive. He did not know where this infection would stop, and the assurances of his friends that they had not known a fatal case of "grains" hardly reassured him. They did not tell him that they had never seen another case as bad as his, a consequence, no doubt, of the fact that his northern blood had not previously been exposed to this particular kind of germ and had developed no immunity to it. Sometimes, especially when he was wakeful in the silence of the night, Eugene would imagine that his infection would before long carry him off. As on the night when he lay bound in the dark storeroom, not knowing whether his captors would finally murder him, he felt death to be horribly near, and every fiber of his being revolted against it. Why should he, who two short weeks ago had been so full of strength and vitality that death seemed remote from him, be singled out from among his contemporaries to pass thus prematurely to the Great Beyond?

No, he did not wish to die. Neither, it occurred to him with a pang, had the birds that he had shot. Those he had wounded and failed to retrieve must in many instances have died a painful, lingering death, just as he now believed that he himself was doing. He tried to lighten the burden of guilt which he was beginning to feel by reflecting that his victims, being less highly organized than himself, probably did not suffer as much as he was suffering. But what, his honesty demanded, did he know about the capacity for enjoyment or suffering of any other creature? Only a fortnight ago, he had no conception of how much he could suffer himself, in body and in mind. He
told himself that most of the birds he had killed would not, in any case, have lived much longer; for recent studies had shown that in some small species a large proportion of all that are hatched die within a year. These studies, however, were made with small birds at high latitudes, where the perils of winter or of migration take a heavy toll, and broods are accordingly larger than in the tropics. Moreover, birds live more intensely than men; their rate of breathing, their heart-beat, their whole metabolism are much more rapid; might not a day of their life correspond, psychically no less than physiologically, to a week or a month of ours? What right had he to deprive them of a single hour of their lives? What right had he to take the life of any creature, save in the defense of his own?

Soon he was ashamed to be trembling and puling at the prospect of his own demise, even alone in the stillness of the night. Was it not despicable for him, who daily for a month had been dealing death to innocent, unsuspecting creatures, to wince at the imminence of his own? For Edwin it would be different; since he took the life of no creature except in the defense of himself and those dear to him, he could with dignity and consistency lament the premature loss of his own. Yet Edwin had staked his life, and come within an ace of losing it, to save his friend; whereas he, Eugene, had never risked his life for anybody. If Edwin dreaded death, his dread was moral because he had made it universal; and Eugene had studied ethics enough
to know that a moral maxim or principle must have universal application, must, as Kant expressed it in his famous Categorical Imperative, be as impersonal as a law of nature. "Universal," as used by moral philosophers, generally meant "applying to all men equally." But was not this restriction to the human sphere an abuse of the term "universal?" In any case, the more one shrank from killing any creature of whatever kind, the more one could, without loss of self-respect, tremble at the prospect of his own impending death, as Eugene could not avoid doing now.

He was far too weak to begin the studies of nesting birds for which he had come to Selva Alegre, but he spent much time sitting on the veranda, watching the constant stream of birds that came to eat the bananas placed for them on the board in a nearby tree, where, through his field glasses, he could see every detail of their forms and colors, far more adequately than while they flitted restlessly through the foliage. A dozen kinds were in more or less constant attendance, and he was impressed with how well they all got along together. Sometimes one diner threatened another, of its own or a different species, who pressed it too closely; rarely one tried to monopolize the board and drive all the others away; but only once in hours of watching did he see two individuals clash momentarily together, without injuring each other. Often four or five birds of as many kinds would eat together in unity, and a tiny, brilliant honeycreeper sometimes shared a banana with a dull-colored thrush who seemed a monster beside it. At this season, a male
tanager would often ceremoniously offer a billful of fruit to his mate, who was busily helping herself to the same food.

Eugene spent much time reading, often while sitting on warm afternoons in the deep cool shade of a rose-apple tree that grew beside the house. His curiosity was aroused by a shelf of books on Oriental religion and philosophy, and he asked Mr. Fernley to recommend a few for his perusal. He was given translations of some of the more illuminating of the classical texts, with modern commentaries to guide him to their meaning. As he read ancient scriptures whose names in dead tongues he could neither pronounce nor remember, a new and unsuspected world opened to his view. He was surprised and delighted to discover how much attention the ancient sages had given to the world of life, but from a motive that was new to him. Whereas Western scientists had in modern times investigated every branch of the vegetable and animal kingdoms for the sake of knowledge itself or of man's more efficient exploitation of the natural world, these philosophers of long ago studied and classified living things to guide their treatment of them. Their motive was neither purely scientific nor economic but ethical. They believed that every living thing, of whatever kind, should be permitted to live its own life and work out its destiny with a minimum of interference by ourselves. But they were aware that we cannot live and move without multiple interactions with the teeming life around us. Some living things, vegetable if not animal, are indispensable for our food; and against others we must protect our persons, our
growing crops, and our homes. We cannot avoid impinging upon
the lives which surround us, and to do so intelligently and
humanely, we must understand their psychology.

To guide our dealings with the living world, the Jaina
philosophers of ancient times undertook to classify all the
organisms they knew according to the number of their senses.
At the bottom of the scale they placed the plants, endowed with
the single sense of touch; at the top, man and the other verte-
brates, along with a few of the higher invertebrate animals,
equipped with the five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing
and sight. The modern zoologist would in certain instances dis-
agree with their assessment of the animal’s sensory equipment
and be amused by the resulting classification, although he
would recognize that it was at least as valid as that which,
at about the same period, the great Aristotle had worked out
in Greece. But whatever failings in detail the system might have,
it seemed sound in principle, and one could hardly take except-
ion to the use that was made of it. Since we must exploit
some living things in order to preserve our own lives and we
wish to do so with the least possible infliction of pain and
distress, it seems logical to choose for our food and clothing
those with the fewest senses, which as a rule have the most
rudimentary nervous systems and, presumably, the least develop-
ed psychic life. Jaina householders and farmers were permitted
to exploit one-sensed plants, with the exception of certain
species that appear to possess more abundant life, but not any
organism higher in the scale. The ascetics, bound by a stricter code, could not even harm plants, although, perhaps inconsistently, they could eat vegetable food that others had prepared for them.

From the texts which he now eagerly devoured, Eugene gathered that the thinkers of the ancient East, especially in India and China, were often inspired by a delicacy of sentiment, a feeling for the wonder and sacredness of life in all its forms, which the more objective modern study of nature only exceptionally engenders in those who pursue it. Not only did their intention to harm nothing extend to the whole animal kingdom, but even vegetable life received tender consideration. The faithful were exhorted to abstain from unnecessarily uprooting trees, trampling grass, plucking flowers or leaves, breaking twigs, and the like. In ancient India, Buddhist monks and nuns avoided travel at the beginning of the rainy season, so as not to crush the tender shoots that sprang up along the paths. A Jain ruler, who wished to choose the most humane and enlightened of his subjects to serve as spiritual guides and teachers for the others, resorted to a stratagem. He announced a grand festival at the palace, and on the appointed day he had all the walks and approaches to it thickly strewed with germinating seeds. Some of the more eminent of his subjects remained absent. When the king inquired why they did not attend the festival, he learned that they stayed away from the palace because they could not reach it without crushing the tender
new shoots that covered all the paths. These absentees were chosen to fill the important posts.
Chapter 22

ON THE CLIFF

The afternoon sun, still high in the heaven, beat down hotly on Edwin as he sat on the cliff-top above the pass which his father had called "Thermopylae," scantily shaded by a few young trees that had grown up amid the fork-fern which surrounded him. He sat on a low wooden box, with one of the automatic rifles taken from the dead Nicas resting between upright forked sticks beside him. Close by his motionless feet a striped lizard with a long, deep blue tail was basking in the warm sunshine. Edwin looked up and down the stony road that passed between the foot of the cliff and the river. As far as he could see, it was deserted, save for a solitary cow who had escaped from some neglected farm and was cropping the roadside grass. For ten days, he and his father and Beto Elizondo and Chico Rodríguez had been guarding the pass by turns; but hardly anyone had travelled along the road to break the monotony of their solitary vigil. The Nicas had not again attempted to invade the valley of the Aguas Claras, possibly because they were deterred by the short squat man's account of the hot reception he and his fellow pillagers had received, when two had fallen and he had escaped with a wounded arm.

Don Chico Rodríguez had remained at Selva Alegre, whence he made daily visits to his own farm. Although his ransacked house had not been burned by Raul Carro and the Nicas, his
wife refused to return there until all danger from the pillagers
had passed. Since Don Chico was a veteran of the first enga-
ment with the Nicas, Mr. Fernley had more confidence in him
than in anybody else who was available to serve as guard, with
the exception of Edwin.

Edwin looked again down the deserted roadway, yawned,
wiped his perspiring face with a handkerchief, and swatted a
little black fly from the neighboring river that was sucking
blood from the back of his hand. How slowly the hours dragged
by while he sat here on the cliff-top, watching for an enemy
who never appeared! What a succession of wasted days he had
lived through, since this accursed revolution broke out!
There was so much that he wished to accomplish, and so little
time in which to accomplish it. His marriage with Elvira, his
research, the reading he had planned to do—everything was
stagnating. The life which, at the age of twenty-four, pulsed
strongly in him was pushing him onward so insistently, yet
all things seemed to conspire to impede his advance.

Sometimes his thoughts reverted to his brother, lying
beneath the clay on the hilltop behind the house. What might
Harold have accomplished, if his life had not been cut off so
prematurely? He had immense energy and was no fool; perhaps,
if he had been permitted to live, he would before long have
discovered latent abilities and done something of which his
family could be proud. Now it was the same, or almost the same,
as though Harold had never lived. True, if Eugene finally re-
covered from his infection, he would owe his life to Harold;
but in saving Eugene, Harold had only rescued him from the peril into which he had himself unintentionally led him. As remembrance of Harold faded from the minds of the few people who had known him well, it would be as though he had never lived. Edwin recalled how a fellow student, older than himself and far from brilliant, used to exclaim, on the frequent occasions when his research went badly, "In a thousand years it will all be the same!"--the same whether he succeeded or failed. Yes, to exceedingly few people is it given to do anything that will make a perceptible difference in the world a thousand years later; to fewer still, to do something that will make the world perceptibly better rather than worse. In far less than a thousand years, most of us will be wholly forgotten. Why, then, this urgency to discover new facts, to fill one's mind with knowledge, to marry and beget children? What difference will it make, a few years hence, whether one lives and strives or, like Harold, passes prematurely into the dark beyond?

A rustling amid the fern below him aroused Edwin from his melancholy reverie. "Halt! Who goes there?" he said sharply, pretending not to know who was approaching.

"A friend," came the reply, in a soft feminine voice.

"Give the password, then."

"Love abounding."

A loved face appeared above the narrow path that wound up
the flank of the promontory. A moment later, Elvira emerged
from the thicket and sank down on the trampled fern in the
clear space beside Edwin. Beads of perspiration gleamed on her
smooth forehead.

"What heat!" she exclaimed, wiping her brow. "How you poor
men must suffer, guarding this pass! I thought you would be
thirsty, so I brought you a drink, and some cookies to go with
it. I'm sorry the fresco is no better, but it's the best we
can make in these times."

She removed a bottle and a glass from the basket that she
carried, filled the latter with a pale brown liquid, and passed
it to Edwin, along with a paper in which some small cakes were
wrapped.

Edwin took a deep draught. "Even lemon grass tastes good
when one is thirsty," he exclaimed between gulps. "I'm very
grateful for it. Anything new at the house?" he added, biting
into a cookie.

"Nothing! It's easy to see that Mother still feels Harold's
loss acutely, but she holds her head up and goes on with her
work. It's hard to plan meals for seven people with so little
to choose from. I wonder what you have been thinking, sitting
here all alone in the hot sunshine."

"I wasn't alone. A little lizard was keeping me company,
but he scuttled away when better company arrived. I was think-
ing with impatience how much time I've lost from my work since
this turmoil started. I was wondering whether I'll be able to
finish my research in time to return for the fall term at the university."

"And suppose you couldn't, and had to stay here six months or even a year longer—would that be a calamity?" Elvira asked.

"Another year here would certainly be endurable, especially if we are together and things quiet down. I suppose it would be no great loss, but somehow I should hate to fal l so far behind the schedule I had set for myself."

"But even if you should spend another year here and then a year at the university, you might get your Ph. D. at the age of twenty-six, which is younger than many people do," Elvira pointed out.

"Yes, I know it's irrational to be in such a hurry. A while ago, when I thought of Harold lying there in his grave, it seemed not to matter whether I get a degree or let the whole thing drop. But when I think of you and our life together, the aspect changes, and it seems important to get ahead with things. Relentlessly Life seems to be spurring me onward. I wonder whether you ever feel that way?"

"Often I do, especially when I think of all the things we've planned to do together," she replied. "Look! There's someone coming up the road."

Far downstream, where the roadway passed from view around a bend, a solitary figure appeared. As he came nearer, they could see that he carried a sack, half-full, over his shoulder. He had no visible weapon.

"Aside from Don Chico, who goes back and forth to his farm
almost every day, he's only the third person I've seen come up that road the whole time I've been watching here," Edwin remarked. "I wonder who he is. Do you recognize him?"

"I believe that's Lice Molino," replied Elvira, after the wayfarer had come a little nearer. Then, after a further interval, she added: "Yes, I'm sure it's Lice; I recognize him by his high shoulders and skinny neck. He lives farther up the valley. He moved there from 'outside' while you were away."

"I wonder what he's been doing."

"Probably looking for something to eat, to judge by his sack. So far as I know, he's not a bad fellow. Will you challenge him?"

"No," Edwin replied, "We'll lie low and let him pass without knowing we're here. The fewer people who know about this guard post, the better. One can never tell who'll turn out to be an Ephialtes."

The man, bent under the weight of his sack and walking swiftly, passed under the cliff, never suspecting how easily the sentinel above him might have stopped his steps for ever.

"Who is Ephialtes?" asked Elvira, after the pedestrian had passed beyond hearing.

"He was the Greek traitor who led the Persians along a mountain path above the pass of Thermopylae, eluding Leonidas and his men and catching them in a trap."

"I see what you mean," said Elvira. "Yes, it's better to keep your presence here a secret. But if you don't challenge the people who come up the road, as you challenged me, how do
you know whom to let pass and whom to stop? The Nicas don't wear uniforms."

"The rule we follow is to let all unarmed men pass unchallenged. A solitary man with a rifle may be challenged, if we don't recognize him. If several unrecognized men approach bearing arms, and they are not wearing the blue-and-white caps of the revolutionary forces, we are to fire without speaking, especially if they are dark and look like Nicas. It's not chivalrous, I know, but these are not the days of chivalry -- which were glamorous, I suppose, only in romances. Too much depends on stopping the Nicas for us to risk alerting them and having them fire at us."

"But if there are a number of them," Elvira said, "you may not succeed in shooting them all down before they return your fire, and if there is a good marksman among them, you may be killed."

"But the sound of the fusillade would warn the people at home, and you could all run and hide in the forest."

"Do you think I would want to run and save myself with you lying here severely wounded, or perhaps dead? Edwin! I'm hurt that you should think so meanly of me. I should not want to live if you were dead."

"But if I were to be killed, my parents would be left without a son and Violet without a brother. You could be a great comfort to them. You could prove your love and devotion to me better by helping them than by following me out of the world."

"That is what I would do, then, Edwin. But I would never
marry anyone else."

They sat for a while in silence, watching the roadway, across which the shadows were creeping from the riverside trees. In the roadside grass a flock of anis, lean black birds with high-arched bills and long, loosely attached tails, were pursuing grasshoppers with clumsy agility. At short intervals a migrating moth flew up the valley, alone or with one or two others, sending forth flashes of golden-green from the stripes and spots on its large black wings, which had projecting ends that made it look like a swallow-tailed butterfly.

Presently Elvira said: "I wish we could be married promptly, Edwin. Then, if we should be killed, we would die as husband and wife and be united for ever."

"I also wish we could be married promptly, but not for that reason. Marriage is a necessary social institution, but I doubt whether it has any significance beyond the grave. If our spirits survive our bodies, as I hope they will, I'm sure that they will be bound indissolubly together by the strength of our love, whether we are wedded or not."

"Yes, love alone should unite them for ever. Nevertheless, I would like to be married before another week has passed. Mother returned to San José nearly two months ago, and we still haven't heard whether she has consulted Padre Benavides about her conscientious scruples. We've waited long enough. Who could marry us?"

"Here there are neither civil nor ecclesiastical authorities. We are living in a state of complete anarchy," said Edwin.
"It seems to me that we are living as in olden times, when the head of the family was the patriarch who presided over the family religion, and whose word was law."

"Or you might say," Edwin added, "that this is a little principality, and Father is the king whose authority is supreme, while the revolution lasts."

"If he is the highest authority here, he should be able to marry us, if he will."

"Yes, let's ask him to do it --tomorrow!" exclaimed Edwin, taking her hand in his.

"Yes, tomorrow," she agreed, looking into his shining eyes.

"We'll ask him as soon as he arrives. He'll be here any minute now, to relieve me."

Before long, Mr. Fernley's head appeared among the fern on the flank of the cliff. He came into view saying: "You two look so radiant that it warms my heart to see you. You prove that even in perilous times lovers can be happy. I apologize for the interruption, but I've come to replace the guard."

"We're glad you've come, Father. We have a request to make of you," said Edwin.

"I'll be happy to do anything I can for you," Mr. Fernley replied.

"We want you to marry us, tomorrow, if possible."

"But neither Church nor State has invested me with power to perform marriages," said Mr. Fernley.

"No, but here, where all other authority is in abeyance, you are head of both Church and State, the supreme authority who can do as appears best to you," his son explained.
"That is indeed a heavy responsibility, but I fear that my reign will be brief. These Central American revolutionary disturbances rarely last more than a few weeks, often for only a few days. For the most part, they are the mere sparring for power of rival factions; the issues are rarely large and vital enough to enlist large segments of the population and keep them fighting for years, as has often happened in the civil wars of other countries. Before long, one side or the other will win; then the victorious party will assert its sovereignty, and I'll be deposed."

"But while your reign lasts, couldn't you marry us?" pleaded Elvira.

"It would give me great pleasure; but I fear that any ceremony that I might perform wouldn't be recognized as binding, except by ourselves. To give your marriage legality, it would have to be done over again after this disturbance ends and government is re-established. Besides, it doesn't seem quite fitting for Edwin to be married so soon after his brother's burial. I'm sure that his mother would be hurt if we even proposed such a thing. I advise that you be patient and wait a few weeks longer."

"Yes, I suppose that you are right. But we've already waited so long, haven't we, Elvira?" complained Edwin, disappointed.

"Yes, it does seem long," she agreed. "But we said we would wait until July, if it took that long to win my parents' consent, and this is only April."

"Yes, I suppose we must be patient, while life slips away,"
he said, taking Elvira's hand and leading her down the cliff.

Meanwhile Mr. Fernley, smiling to himself, settled down with his rifle beside him, to guard the road until it grew dark. No night attack was anticipated. Since the pillagers had long been wandering unopposed over the whole district, there was no reason why they should take the trouble to make a surprise attack under cover of darkness.
Chapter 23
UNDER THE ROSE-APPLE TREE

One afternoon, while Eugene sat reading in the deep shade of his favorite rose-apple tree, Violet brought him a fresco made of lemon grass sweetened with brown sugar, which was still available because it was made on a neighboring farm. After delivering the drink, she was about to walk away, but he stopped her.

"Stay and talk to me a little, if you are not too busy," he pleaded. "Take my chair, and I will sit on the grass."

"No, you should not, because your legs are still bad. I'll bring a cushion."

She fetched a cushion from the house, placed it on the lawn near his chair, and settled on it, wondering what he would say.

"You have been most kind to me," he said when she was seated. "Everybody here has been exceedingly good to me, but you seem to avoid me. I can understand why. If I had not come, your brother would still be alive."

"No, that is not the reason. It would be unjust to hold you responsible for Harold's death. You certainly did not intend that."

"What is it, then?" He thought for a moment. "I believe that I know. You have shunned me ever since the afternoon when you came with the cookies that you made and found me in the roadway holding the blue-and-green bird that I had shot down still alive. I learned from Harold that you had made the cookies,
but you would not tell me. Yes, that's certainly it! You started to hate me when you saw me killing the bird. I can understand that. Now that I have been recalled to my ideals, I hate myself for every bird that I shot."

"No, I do not hate you, Gene. Father taught us, when we were children, how stupid it is to hate things that molest or displease us—stupid, and harmful to oneself, too, for hatred destroys our peace of mind and upsets our digestion. He said that we should always ask why a man or an animal did as he did; then we would understand that it behaved so because such was its nature and it could not have done otherwise. Nothing, except a truly enlightened man, can alter its nature. How irrational, then, to hate the mouse that has gnawed a hole in one's best dress for acting as a mouse must act! It would be more reasonable to hate oneself for not putting the dress in the wardrobe, where the mouse could not reach it. When a man does wrong, or an animal is troublesome, I do not hate him but feel sorry for him."

"Then you did not hate me but were sorry for me that afternoon?" Eugene asked.

"Well, I'm not a saint, and I suppose that for a while I hated you, or almost hated you. It was such a shock to see my brother's friend, a man of whom I thought well, squeezing the life out of an innocent bird. But as soon as the first shock was over and I began to think, I did not hate but felt sorry for you."

"But why should a callous monster, as no doubt I then appear-"
ed to you, deserve your sympathy?"

"Because you did as you were doing as a result of circum-
stances that you were not strong enough to resist and you
were harming yourself. There is a Buddhist saying which Father
likes to quote, that we cannot harm others without harming
ourselves, nor harm ourselves without harming others. All
beings, the Buddhists hold, are closely interconnected, and
our feeling of separateness is an illusion."

"How was I harming myself by harming the birds?"

"You were blunting your finer feelings and narrowing your
sympathies. For anyone, that is lamentable, but for you it was
especially disastrous. As you told us more than once, you wished
above all to understand how birds live, and for that it seems
necessary to put oneself in rapport with them, to feel as they
feel and think as they think, so far as it is possible for a
human being to do so. But by treating them as mere potential
'specimens,' as unfeeling objects rather than as sensitive
living things, you were fast destroying whatever sympathy with
them you had, and undermining the foundation of your future
studies."

He leaned back in his rocking chair and closed his eyes,
marvelling at her insight. "How else was I harming myself?"
he presently asked.

"You were neglecting the work that you believed it most
important for an ornithologist like you to do. In one of your
letters, you said that you did not expect to make any discover-
ies by collecting, because the birds of this country were
already well classified, and what was needed was knowledge of their behavior, especially their nesting habits. But you had become so obsessed by the mania that seems to infect everyone who collects, whether it be postage stamps or match boxes or orchids or birds, that you continued your shooting after the birds had begun to nest on all sides, and you should have been studying them."

"Yes, I see now," he said. "I was harming myself by harming other beings; and by not taking better care of myself, and allowing myself to get into trouble, I unintentionally brought great harm upon those who deserved better treatment from me. That Buddhist saying is most true. All things are so intimately interconnected that we cannot harm ourselves without hurting especially those others to whom we owe most; just as we cannot hurt others without hurting ourselves. But I hope that, in consideration of my ignorance, I may be forgiven, if not by the birds that I have wronged, at least by the people upon whom I have brought suffering. Although naturally I did not grow up without some aches and pains, I really did not, until quite recently, know what it is to suffer. Now that I have experienced it—in a very small way, no doubt—I shall be more careful not to bring it upon others, whether biped or quadruped, feathered or featherless. Henceforth, I am resolved to live as you do, harming no living thing."

"We do not pretend to avoid harming every living thing," Violet corrected him. "Perhaps no animal as large as man, with such varied needs, could do that. All that we claim to do is to try very hard to harm nothing; and even if we do not perfectly
succeed, we find the effort very rewarding. To live, as far as we are able, at peace with all creatures sweetens our lives immeasurably and brings us a sense of oneness with the whole living world. Some people run for their gun or poison spray or exterminator the moment any creature disturbs their comfort or threatens their property. We pause and consider whether there is some other way to stop the irritation or protect our house or crops; whether the discomfort or loss is, after all, more than we can well stand. Often there is some other way, and in seeking it we learn much of interest about the habits of the animals, which those who destroy them too hastily fail to discover. Sometimes the threat is less serious than it appears. One year a large colony of leaf-cutting ants was situated at the edge of our newly sown bean field. Beto declared that if the ants were not destroyed at once they would ruin the germinating beans. As you know, they do much damage to crops in some parts of the tropics. Father said that we should watch carefully but not molest the ants unless they attacked the beans. To everyone's surprise, they hardly touched the bean plants, but confined their cutting to other kinds of leaves. We were all glad that they could be left in peace, for they are agriculturists like ourselves, growing the fungus which nourishes them on the pieces of leaf which they carry into their underground nest and cut into tiny fragments."

"Well," said Eugene, "I shall try as hard as you do to live without harming anything, and I hope that I shall be as successful that you will cease to be sorry for me."

"Would you prefer that I hate you, as for a little while I did?" she asked archly.
"Are those the only alternatives? Is no other feeling toward me possible for you?"

She reflected a few moments, then said: "When you spent your summer vacation with us, nearly four years ago, we all grew very fond of you. I thought you were one of the finest boys I had ever met. The whole family eagerly anticipated your return. But we were tremendously disappointed when we learned all that you proposed to do. Except perhaps Harold, we could no longer feel quite the same toward you. It was, as you know, his idea that you collect birds somewhere else in this valley, then come to Solva Alegre to study their habits. After much soul-searching, and not without misgivings, Edwin finally agreed to this course, in the hope that here with us you would renew the ideal which here with us you had made your own."

"Edwin has been more patient with me than I deserve. His friendship means a great deal to me, and I shall not forgive myself if my stubbornness has strained it beyond recovery. My vacation here was certainly the most memorable of all that I spent. I was so impressed by your way of living at peace with all creatures that I resolved to follow it myself. When I returned home and refused to eat the flesh of slaughtered animals, my parents were disturbed, alleging that my health would suffer, and that being different from nearly everyone else would jeopardize my advancement in whatever career I elected. They regretted having permitted me to go to the tropics with Edwin. But stubbornly persisting in the course that I had chosen for myself, I resisted all the pressure they put upon me, until finally,
seeing that I neither wasted away nor fell behind in my studies, they were reconciled to what they called my queer behavior.

"When I became a graduate student in ornithology," he continued, "I had no intention of relaxing my principles. I wished to study living birds, especially those of tropical America, so wondrously varied and beautiful, so little known except as lifeless skins in the museums. Nobody else in our department felt as I did about taking the life of birds. It sometimes made me sick to see how many of them some of the students killed, to work out some problem that seemed to have little importance. I was constantly being told that my researches would remain incomplete, that I would not find a good position in my profession, if I persisted in my attitude. Finally, I yielded to so much pressure, violating for the sake of science principles that I could not be prevailed upon to transgress for any other reason, not even when it was alleged that I was jeopardizing my health. I suppose that one must work in the laboratories to understand the scientific mentality. For the sake of a new fact, some workers will do things that, I believe, they could hardly bring themselves to do to save their wife or children. Any course, no matter how horrible or cruel, that yields a bit of information seems justified to them. It is the old story of Faust selling his soul to the devil for the sake of knowledge and power. I am sure now that this attitude is wrong. Intellect is not the whole man; our knowledge is at most only a part of ourselves, and not the most central part. We reveal ourselves
more truly in our conduct than in our discourse; and a person who compromises his character by cruel or base acts, all for the sake of a few facts to stuff into his head or publish in a scientific paper, is selling himself to Mephistopheles. I see that all clearly now. But for a while, in the atmosphere of the laboratory, I almost forgot it, to my sorrow."

"I should have thought that you would have gone into some other field, rather than consent to do things that you held to be wrong," said Violet.

"I considered that, but finally decided against it. I had no interest in business; I could never become excited about making money. Since I was an undergraduate, I have had the notion, perhaps erroneous, that I was cut out to be a scientist; and to be a scientist of any account means to do research. To be successful at that, I believe it indispensable to feel that the research problem on which you are currently engaged is the most important thing that you could possibly do. Without that feeling of supreme importance, one can hardly preserve his enthusiasm in the face of the recurrent obstacles, delays, perplexities and disappointments that seem inseparable from an original investigation that may lead to an important discovery. To go stale on one's research, because it no longer seems important and loses its excitement, must be a devastating experience. I was intimate with a zoologist, somewhat older than myself, to whom that happened. It was dreadful, he said, to be committed to pursue investigations which had lost all zest. He sometimes wished that he were working in an office or a factory,
doing just what he was told to do, never having to use his initiative, and looking forward to his weekly pay check as the sufficient reward for his effort. To avoid the risk of falling into such a pitiful state, I thought that I had better stick to the project on which I had set my heart, with the consequences that you know only too well."

"They were certainly most unfortunate. Now that I understand better, it is easier for me to— I shall not say 'forgive,' since you intended no harm to me personally— but to sympathize with your unhappy predicament, and to feel truly sorry for you. Now I must go and help Mother with the supper. The sun is sinking low."

She arose and entered the house. Eugene leaned back in his chair, watching the ruddy alpenglow give a strange splendor to the distant mountain crests. "Yes," he reflected, "by harming other creatures I harmed myself in various ways, and not the least of them was the alienation of one of the loveliest and most intelligent girls that I have ever met."
Chapter 24

VIOLET AND ELVIRA

More than a month had crept by without any news from the larger world beyond Urcna, or any from there that could be trusted. It was now past the middle of April, and since early March Eugene had received no letter from his family. Since he had no reason to suppose that they were otherwise than safe and well, the lack of news from them would, in ordinary circumstances, not have ruffled his sanguine temperament; but in his present depressed condition he fretted and worried. Mrs. Fernley could not help wondering how her aged mother, her brothers and sister and their families, had fared in a revolution-torn country. But most distressing of all was Elvira's situation. Since her father had set forth on a perilous journey five weeks earlier, nothing had been heard of him. Nor did she know what had happened to her mother and younger sisters in the distant Capital. Mr. Fernley assured her that they were in little danger. Although the uncontrolled troops of the Government might pillage and burn in the remote back country; in the center, in the full glare of publicity, neither faction could permit its adherents to run amuck without discrediting itself with the public, to its own great loss.

During their three years at school in the North, Violet and Elvira had been roommates, helping each other with their lessons, lending each other clothes, and comforting each other when they were homesick. Now Elvira shared Violet's bedroom. One night, as they were preparing for
bed, Elvira said to her friend:

"How fortunate I am to have two families! If everyone here were not so kind to me, I should be out of my mind worrying about my parents, especially my poor father. It is a great comfort to have Edwin, he is so good. Edwin's soul is a deep pool, but it is so pure and clear that I can see right to the bottom of it—at least, so I believe. We conceal nothing from each other. I know that some of my acquaintances would censure me for consenting to marry him outside the Church, but I cannot agree that I am doing wrong. As far as I have seen, the sacrament of the Church does not insure that a man will be a true and faithful husband, nor does its absence imply that he will be a bad one. More important than how the marriage is performed is the character of those who are wedded and the strength of their love for each other. I doubt if any woman could love any man more than I love Edwin."

"You could not love him more than he loves you. If he were not my brother, I should be jealous. The man I marry must be able to stand comparison with him. I often doubt that I shall ever find one. Probably I shall die an old maid."

"It will not be for lack of an ardent admirer."

"Who do you mean?" asked Violet, combing her hair.

"Eugene Rivers, of course. He is always stealing glances at you, when he thinks nobody is looking. Anyone with half an eye can see that he loves you."

"Oh! but I could not marry him, even if he asked me."

"Why not? He is good-looking, intelligent, your brother's
best friend. I think it would be hard to find a more eligible young man. Why couldn't you marry him?"

"For the reason I already told you," replied Violet, "what I saw that afternoon when I took the cookies to him."

"But you told me only yesterday that he seems sincerely repentant, that he sees his error and is not likely to repeat it. I did not suppose that you were so unforgiving."

"I have forgiven him," Violet said. "After his long explanation of why he decided to shoot birds, I felt truly sorry for him. But forgiveness and pity are not love--at least, not the kind of love that a woman should have for the man she marries."

"Then if you had a fiancé, or even a husband, and he did something of which you strongly disapproved, you would break with him at once, and have no more to do with him? I believe that my love would be stronger than that."

"The case you suppose is different," explained Violet. "The full-grown tree is scarcely affected by the gnawing caterpillar that destroys the tender sprouting seedling. I was not in love with Gene. When he was here four years ago, we were still hardly more than children. I liked him immensely; I admired him; but I was not mature enough to be in love with him. Edwin's frequent mention of him in letters over the years kept him fresh in memory, so that I believed that I could readily fall in love with him. But when that love was only a little sprouting germ, it was withered by a blighting impression. Besides, do what I will, I cannot quite cast from my mind the thought that his stubborn-"
ness caused Harold's death and brought so much sorrow upon us all. Please do not misunderstand me. I bear him no malice, but have only good wishes for his recovery and future happiness."

"Edwin told me that when Gene wrote that he must collect birds, Edwin was at first doubtful whether he should be permitted to come, but he was finally influenced to give his consent by the hope that here his friend would be recalled to the ideal of his youth that he had abandoned under pressure. I understand that you agreed with Edwin on this point. Well, Gene has come and has been recalled to his forsaken ideal, quite drastically and effectively, it appears. Now I think that you should be gratified, and do everything in your power to prevent his slipping again."

"Do you believe," asked Violet, "that it would be right for a woman to marry a man she did not love, in order to convert him to her religion or some other belief, or to prevent his abandoning a cause dear to herself?"

"The notion is repugnant to me. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, as when one's country could not otherwise be saved, would such a course seem justifiable; and even then it would be a profanation of marriage. Only love can hallow marriage."

"Well?"

"I was talking that way, dear Violet, because I am troubled. Your standard is so high that it is going to be difficult for you to find a husband who comes up to it. Some of your admirers were men that most girls would have taken great pains to cultivate, but you disdained them, and I understand why. Of all the
young bachelors I know, Gene seems the most suitable for you, and Edwin agrees with me. It must be devastating for a woman with your capacity for loving devotion to grow old without husband or children on whom to lavish it. There is nothing I desire more than to see you as happily engaged as I am, as happily married as Edwin and I shall soon be. How splendid it would be if our children could grow up together, as you and I have done! That is the reason why I am hoping that time will efface the unfavorable impression than an exceptionally fine man has made on you."

"Only time can tell what time will do," said Violet, turning down the lamp and getting into bed. "Pleasant dreams!"

"May yours be sweeter!"

Elvira, thinking happily of Edwin, soon fell asleep; but Violet's troubled thoughts kept her awake. To her, gentleness and compassion -- the will to harm no sentient being -- was the foremost of the virtues, of which all other genuine moral virtues are but corollaries. For why do we esteem justice, honesty, veracity, temperance, chastity, and the rest, if not because they are the foundations of happiness, and deviations from the attitudes and conduct which we designate by those names tend to disintegrate society and bring suffering in their train? And her brother's friend, the man she had been prepared to love, had fallen signally from this supreme virtue -- fallen, too, from the ideal that he had earlier professed. Perhaps the trouble was that the ideal had been too superficially held, had not penetrated to the inmost core of his being. It had not, as with
Edwin and herself, been implanted in the mind in earliest childhood and grown along with its growth; nor yet had it been born in the travail of a tortured soul, as in the case of their father. Eugene had adopted the ideal under the influence of congenial surroundings and people he admired, because, indeed, it appealed strongly to his generous nature. But it had not become an integral part of himself, and under pressure he had been untrue to it. It required the fortuitous circumstances of a political revolution and the suffering it had brought upon him, to recall him to his neglected ideal.

Violet did not despise Eugene for his defection. At least in his boyhood he had been capable of appreciating the beauty of, and adopting, an ideal that is too large for the souls of most men who have not been prepared for it from childhood; and he now sincerely lamented his apostasy. Violet felt toward Eugene as a charitable man of high principles might feel toward a beautiful woman who had compromised her chastity, suffered, and been redeemed. He would pity rather than reprobate her, but he could not imagine taking her as his wife. In Violet's eyes, Eugene's character was too imperfect to nourish that illusion of perfection in mind and body which is the necessary counterpart of perfect love.

But if not Eugene, who? No other possibility was in sight. The springtime of her life was slipping by, and, as she lay in the darkness close by her sleeping friend, long, barren years loomed ahead. Her dear parents would not always be with her. She could see herself as the adoring maiden aunt of her brother's
children. She would tell them some of the stories that her fertile imagination was always weaving, and if the children liked them, she would collect them into a book. That would certainly be better than nothing. But would it satisfy her?
Chapter 25

THE MESSENGER

The weeks dragged slowly by. Nature pursued her bountiful course, indifferent to political upheavals and the sufferings of wayward men. Repeated showers had renewed the vegetation that languished at the height of the dry season. The tall mayo trees had become masses of gold, visible from afar. The orange trees, which had flowered early in April, bore innumerable little green spheres, hardly larger than peas. The maize plants reached to the farmer’s knees, and the sprouting rice formed little tufts of green. The birds were everywhere singing and nesting. But the man who had come to study the birds got no better, for lack of the remedy he needed. The mercenaries continued to terrorize the region; and the little community along the Aguas Claras, which so far had been spared a second visitation, still lived in almost total isolation.

Mrs. Fernley’s small supply of sulpha tablets, which might have controlled Eugene’s infection, had been exhausted in the vain effort to keep Harold alive. Nothing else in the medicine chest did any good.

One evening toward the end of April, when the Fernleys and Elvira were sitting in the library after Eugene had gone early to bed, Edwin said: “We must get something for Gene. He has sores all over his body, and if we do not soon stop this infection, it may prove fatal.”

“But what can we do?” asked Mrs. Fernley. “We are told that
the village

every shop in Oaxa has been plundered by the Nicas, and
business is at a standstill. It is dangerous to go there,
and beyond that it is hardly possible to go. Where can we get
anything for him?"

"I have been making inquiries around the neighborhood,"
Edwin replied. "Don Atanasio, the pharmacist, has a farm in
San Isidro.
El Copalillo, on the other side of Oaxa. Possibly he has
taken refuge there; and if he could have saved any of his
stock by carrying it to his farm, he certainly would have
done so. Tomorrow I am going to look for him and see if he
can supply a remedy. It is the one chance of saving Gene that
I see."

This statement raised a storm of protest from the three
women, because of the danger he would incur.

"I have given one son to save Eugene, and that seems
enough," declared Mrs. Fernley. "Have you no compassion for
your poor parents, no sense of duty to your home and your
fiancé? For well over a month she has had no news from her
family. Will you give her another cause for anxiety?"

"But if Gene is lost, Harold will have died in vain. To
complete the work for which he gave his life, we must save Gene.
I shall, of course, go on foot, keeping off the main roads as
much as possible. I believe that I shall not be in much danger."

"Edwin, I command you, I implore you, not to go," said his
mother, tears in her eyes.

"Please, Edwin, do not take that terrible risk," pleaded
Elvira, who had turned quite white.
"Edwin, it is not fair to distress us so, after all we have been through. You risked your life once, and came within an inch of losing it. That seems enough for anyone to do for his friend," said Violet.

"In time of civil strife, one's life is constantly in jeopardy," Edwin argued. "And a soldier risks his life daily in battle. Until this horrible mess is over, nobody can feel safe. I had better do what is right, even if it means increasing my risk."

"Why not send one of the boys from the farm?" suggested Elvira. "He would run far less risk than you. Who would harm a barefoot boy whose only wealth is the labor of his arms? Why should anyone wish to capture him, when they could not with the utmost torture squeeze five colonels out of him?"

"I am not so sure that the boy would be safe," Mr. Fernley said. "The best men will not do wrong for any motive. The common mass of men will do wrong if impelled by a sufficiently strong motive. The worst of men seem to delight in doing evil without any motive at all, beyond the demoniac delight they take in harming others. Our loving paternalistic Government, that is now fighting for its existence, seems to have inflicted a mob of such fiendish men on our unhappy valley. We certainly cannot guarantee the safety of any boy we might send."

"It does not seem right to expose others, for our sake, to a risk that we refuse to take ourselves. That is the reason why I believe that I should go. What do you think, Father?" Edwin asked.
"Do you desire a moral judgment, or a declaration of my feelings?"

"I believe I know the latter; what I desire is the former."

"I am so eager not to lose my one remaining son that I find it impossible to give you an unbiased judgment. I suppose that you will have to consult your own conscience and reach your own decision, taking into account all that your mother and sister and betrothed have just said to you."

"Whichever alternative I choose seems to be wrong. It is certainly not right to distress everyone here by a long day's absence, during which they will be wondering what has happened to me, nor to deprive them of the help I can give them, should it happen that I do not return. Neither does it seem right to permit Gene to die by inches before our eyes, when with proper treatment he might be saved. I'm in a quandry."

"When everyone has been doing right," remarked Mr. Fernley, "it is as a rule not very difficult to decide what we should do next. But when wrong has been done, it becomes exceedingly hard to determine what should follow. In addition to the harm which results directly from the evil act, it immensely complicates our moral judgments; and this is not the least accusation that can be brought against it. It is as when we are walking in the forest; if we are on the right path, we scarcely ever doubt in which direction our next step should be taken; but if we have made a wrong turn and lost our way, we do not know how to proceed. Well, a tremendous amount of evil has been done here in El General since the revolution began, and that is the reason why we are so perplexed about the right thing to do."
"I suppose I must think more about it," concluded Edwin.

"Tomorrow morning I shall tell you what I have decided. I'll say 'good night' now, as I am tired."

He stepped out on the dark veranda and gazed up at the brilliant stars, so calm and aloof from all our human turmoil and anxieties that the ancient philosophers revered them as gods. He had not stood there half a minute when he felt a hand laid lightly on his arm. Without turning, he knew it was Elvira's.

"Please, please, Edwin," she pleaded with tears in her eyes, "do not go. For six weeks I have not known whether I have a father. Do not deprive me of my betrothed, too."

The appeal went straight to his heart, and from his heart he answered: "I shall not go, Elvira."

Hardly had this promise passed his lips before he was confused. He had told the others that he would give the matter careful consideration before reaching a decision. Now he had answered without thinking. But to retract this hastily given promise to his beloved would be too cruel. So he added, after a moment's pause: "But please do not tell the others yet."

"Thank you, dearest Edwin," she murmured, then vanished in the darkness.

Early next morning when Edwin came to breakfast, his mother said to him: "I do not know what you have decided about going to search for the pharmacist, but you need not trouble yourself about it any more. Lalo has already gone with some money and a note to Don Atanacio. After you had gone to bed, I went to talk to Beto, and he agreed to send the boy at dawn. Now do not ac-
cuse me of having done wrong, because a mother's heart tells her when she has done right. You cannot deny that a boy like Lalo is less likely to attract attention along the roads than you are, and accordingly he runs less risk. If he sees armed men, he can slip into a thicket or a cane field until they have passed. Besides, Beto has four sons, and I have only one left."

"Well, Mother, if Lalo has already left, there is no point in saying more about it. We can only wait for the outcome."

He kissed her cheek.

The beautiful, spring-like day passed with even more than the usual tension. As the sun sank low in the west and Lalo did not return, apprehension increased. Mrs. Fernley began to accuse herself bitterly for having sent the foreman's boy on a perilous errand, but she bit her lips and said nothing. Finally, an hour after dark, a whistle sounded in the distance, and a minute later Lalo appeared. He had found Don Atanasio on his farm and given him Mrs. Fernley's note. The pharmacist had succeeded in saving part of his stock, but most of his remedies had already been sold or given to neighbors who needed them. Fortunately, he still had a few tablets of sulphanilamide, the last of which he wrapped up in a bit of newspaper and handed to Lalo, along with directions for taking them.

After delivering the packet to Mrs. Fernley, the boy related the exciting adventures of his long day. The roads were almost deserted, and he met scarcely any travellers. Almost all the horses and cattle had disappeared from the pastures along the way. He saw a number of burnt houses, and those that still stood
appeared to be abandoned. At one point he espied, far ahead, two men approaching with guns. He dived into a roadside canefield to hide, but not before they had noticed him. He crept far in and threw himself flat in the weeds between the rows of thick sugar canes, scarcely daring to breathe. After a while, he heard something moving among the canes not far off. He was sure that the Micas were searching for him. Not knowing whether it would be better to flee or to lie low, he remained immobile, in agonizing indecision.

Presently a big cinnamon-colored rat emerged from among the weeds and began to gnaw the base of a juicy cane. The rodent continued for a long while, until the tall cane began to topple over. Then a big black-and-yellow mica came creeping through the herbage; and before Lalo, or the rat knew what was happening, the snake had seized the rodent, which squealed piteously in the serpent's distended mouth. The boy was most uncomfortable so close to the reptile, but he was still more fearful of the men who he believed were searching for him, so he did not move. Soon the rat began to disappear into the mica's throat, causing a big bulge that slid slowly tailward. Then the serpent vanished. After lying for a long while without hearing more alarming sounds, Lalo gathered courage to rise up and look around. Stealthily he advanced to the field's edge and, peering out, found the road deserted, so he continued on his solitary way.

San Isidro

Lalo had bypassed Urama and was now in unfamiliar territory,
where he was not sure of the road. It was long before he met anybody to direct him, but after a he found a bent, wrinkled old woman smoking a cigar in a ramshackle hut. From her he learned that he had taken the wrong road, but she gave him directions for reaching El Copalillo. At last he found Don Atanasio, received the pills from him, and returned home in the evening without further adventure.

Everyone commended the boy for his diligence; and Mr. Fernley promised him a new shirt and trousers as a reward for his day's work, as soon as business was reestablished and clothing could be bought. Lalo hoped that this would be soon, as the clothes he wore had become ragged, and large patches of white skin showed through the holes. Eugene began at once to take the tablets, and after a few days an improvement in his condition was evident.
Chapter 26
SUFFERING

A few evenings after Lalo brought the remedy, Eugene was feeling well enough to sit up with the others in the library after supper. The single lamp burnt low, for it was necessary to save fuel; the last tin of kerosene was almost empty, and nobody knew when more could be procured. From the direction of Ureña came the sound of distant gunfire, faintly audible through an open window. Everyone wondered what was happening there.

"I am so glad you are feeling better, Gene," said Mrs. Fernley. "You have had a rough time. I hope that now your troubles are almost over."

"Yes, I have suffered in various ways, and lost much time from my work, and brought much trouble upon everyone here, but I feel that these past weeks have not been a total loss. At least they have made me think, and I seem to see certain truths that I had overlooked."

"What are they?" asked Edwin.

"Well, for one thing, the value of suffering itself, its place in the scheme of things. I remember once having read a little book called The Mystery of Pain, which failed to convince me. To a biologist, of course, pain and suffering are no mystery. They arise when sentient creatures are injured in their clashes with each other, maladjusted to their environment, subjected to climatic extremes, afflicted with disease, and so forth. Considering how complex and delicately balanced the
higher animals are, how they must compete with each other for living space and food, how the environment is constantly changing, injuries and maladjustments are inevitably frequent, and suffering widely diffused. Such pain and discomfort seem necessary to stimulate animals with developing minds to use them for the purpose of improving their adjustment and avoiding dangers. Without such use, intelligence itself would not evolve. But beyond its biological function, pain appears to have a moral function which is often overlooked. After my recent experiences, it does not appear so incompatible with the notion of divine providence as I once supposed it to be."

"What would you say is the moral function of suffering?"

Elvira asked.

"It teaches us to be careful not to inflict pain on other creatures. I believe it must have this effect upon every man with a modicum of imagination."

Mr. Fernley added: "It also teaches us, on the moral no less than the biological level, to avoid conduct that brings unhappiness to ourselves, as old Aeschylus recognized long ago, when in the Agamemnon he sang that Zeus, binding fast learning to suffering, sent pain to teach men wisdom."

"If Zeus or God sends suffering to teach us compassion or wisdom," said Mrs. Fernley, "he seems to have apportioned it most carelessly, without considering how much each one needs to produce the desired effect, or whether any good would come of it in particular cases. It is as though a doctor went through all the wards of a hospital, distributing the same strong medi-
cine at random to all the patients, without taking account of their disease or their constitution."

"What do you mean, Mother?" asked Violet.

"I mean that different people require different amounts of suffering to teach them compassion. You and Edwin were so sensitive and imaginative, even as children, that you needed only to be reminded that other creatures feel pain, to make you careful not to hurt them. I suppose that if you had not known pain in your own bodies, you never could have imagined what it is; but I am not sure that childhood’s transient pains should be dignified by the name of suffering; so I contend that you learned compassion, and I hope a modicum of wisdom, too, without having suffered. What would you have gained by it? Then take poor Harold’s case. He did require suffering to make him considerate, especially of animals; but when it came it was unnecessarily severe, and he did not live to profit by it. The dear boy’s suffering seems utterly useless to me, unless you maintain that it is a fine thing to learn a truth even if you die immediately afterward, or unless you suppose, which I hope is true, that Harold has passed to some higher realm of existence, where he can profit what he learned here at the eleventh hour. Take, too, the cases of people and animals who have little or no imagination, so that not even through the most severe and prolonged suffering would they learn to be careful of the feelings of other beings: what good comes of all their suffering, which in aggregate is immense? Only in exceptional cases, as Gene seems to feel was true of his own, does suffering teach
a lesson which may be held to justify its amount."

"If you were Zeus, Mother," Edwin asked, "or let us say
Hera sitting by Zeus's side and telling him how to run the
Universe, as no doubt his good wife did, how much suffering
would you send to mortals?"

"To each according to his need. I would have everyone suffer
just enough to make him careful not to cause suffering anywhere.
To those for whom good precepts would suffice, I would send
excellent teachers, with just a tinge of pain, as from a
child's bump, to make them understand what it is. To others
less gifted with imaginative sympathy, I would send a measure
of suffering, as the case required. Those mortals so stupid
and callous that no amount of suffering could teach them com-
passion present a special problem, that I do not feel competent
to solve. To send them suffering would be futile. Perhaps I
should whisper into my husband's ear that the best course
would be to relieve the earth of their presence, painlessly."

"So you believe," said Eugene, "that those who have not
received enough suffering to make them compassionate have been
cheated, and those who have received more than the requisite
dose have been abused?"

"Exactly! And I cannot help feeling that most mortals have
been either cheated or abused."

Violet rose from her chair to catch a moth that had found
its way into the screened room and was fluttering around the
lamp chimney, in danger of singeing its wings. She took it
outside and released it, watching with a little thrill of pleas-
ure as it flew up into the starlight, a tiny symbol of freedom. "At least one little creature has been spared needless suffering," she thought as she resumed her seat in the library.

"And what of Christ's suffering?" asked Elvira. "Was he abused, as Edwin believes."

"I shall not presume to pass judgment on such high matters," replied Mrs. Fernley. "I was advising my Olympian husband on the treatment of ordinary mortals."

"It seems to me that Jesus's case has something in common with Harold's," Mr. Fernley said. "He did not live to make use of whatever he might have learned from the agony of Calvary, at least not on this earth. Perhaps if he had been rescued from the cross in time to resume his ministry, he might have taught, far more clearly than he did, love and compassion for all creatures, not just for our human neighbors—as devout Christians who espouse the cause of oppressed animals never cease to wish that he had done. If this had been so, I could see some point in Christ's agony. As it was, he appears to have suffered merely to appease his vengeful Father, or to gain a following among those deluded souls who value him more for what he suffered than for what he taught."

"But his case was not quite the same as Harold's," Violet pointed out. "Harold risked death but did not seek it. Jesus sought it by going to Jerusalem, when he might have remained profitably engaged in Galilee and elsewhere, and by refusing to defend himself before Pilate, whose only desire was to keep the peace in a Roman province where it was evidently as difficult
to preserve public order as in a Latin American republic."

"Yes," said Edwin, "but he went to seek crucifixion because he believed from old prophecies that his suffering was necessary to appease the Father and reconcile him to wayward men."

"I believe," Elvira said, "that we are on the wrong track when we try to justify the Crucifixion on the ground that Christ's insight or his character was thereby improved, as though he were some ordinary man, when even those who deny his divinity at least admit that he was a very extraordinary man. I am no theologian, and perhaps the priests would not approve of what I say, but I think it likely that Jesus sought crucifixion so that he might thereby demonstrate to all the world the strength of his love for mankind, which was also his Father's love for man; for the Son and the Father are both held to be aspects of the one God. This seems to me more rational, and more complimentary to God, than to regard the Crucifixion as a peace offering to a vengeful Deity."

"That raises the interesting question whether suffering is the best, or the proper, way to express love," said Mr. Fernley.

"I hope that nobody ever tries to demonstrate love for me in that fashion," remarked Edwin, glancing significantly at Elvira.

"I have been reading about the Buddha," Eugene said, "and I think that his forty years of patient teaching was a more adequate expression of his love for humanity, and all sentient beings, than Christ's day of agony on Calvary. I was raised as a Christian, yet I cannot help but feel that Christianity would
have benefitted immensely if its founder had kept at his
teaching for many years longer."

"No, and all the Hebrew prophets together," said Mr.
Fernley, "taught so little, leaving so many pertinent topics un-
touched or inadequately developed, that the fathers of the
Church were obliged to borrow extensively from the old Greek
philosophers—who, incidentally, were denied admission to
heaven!—in order to lay the foundations of a world religion."

"Love," Violet said, "should express itself in joy, and in
service, which is not suffering but happiness, unless it is
carried to excess and overtaxes one's strength. I suspect that
those who are so insensitive that they cannot be convinced of
the reality of love, unless it suffers for them, are hardly
worthy of being loved or suffered for."

"Yet there must certainly be times," Eugene argued, "when
one who loves will accept suffering in order to shield or to
preserve the loved one."

"In a properly regulated world," answered Violet, "such
occasions should be rare; and anyhow, your contention only
shows that suffering is an accident, not the essence, of love,
as Father would say."

"I have never gone into the question very thoroughly,"
Eugene continued, "but from dipping now and then into Christian
devotional literature, I have carried away the impression
that suffering is so indispensable for our spiritual develop-
ment that we should welcome it. Perhaps it is needed to humble
our pride."

"If you doubt that Christianity has traditionally attached
the greatest importance to suffering," said Mr. Fernley, "you
need only raise your eyes to the highest point of any Christian
church. The symbol that you will see there, the cross to which
the stern Romans nailed their rebellious subjects and slaves,
was one of the most fiendish instruments of torture that man's
misused ingenuity has ever invented. But I do not agree that
suffering is needed to humble our pride. One can become proud
of his ability to endure pain,
said Mr. Fernley, "as was Satan in Milton’s Paradise Lost and, I suspect, many a self-torturing ascetic, Christian, Moslem or Hindu. The proper preventive of pride is constantly to hold before oneself an ideal of conduct or of achievement. If, in comparing oneself with one’s ideal, he finds reason for more than transient satisfaction, he may be sure that he has set his ideal too low."

"But how is it," Eugene asked, "with religions other than Christianity: do they, too, assign an important function to suffering?"

"The Buddha," Mr. Fernley explained, "began his teaching with the Four Noble Truths, the first of which is the truth of pain. But this is simply a statement of fact, not of approval. From this point of departure, Gautama proceeded to analyze the cause of suffering—desire—and to prescribe a course of discipline for its extinction, with the consequent release from suffering not only of humanity but of all sentient beings. The life of the Buddhist monk or nun, as instituted by him, is austere, which is not irrational when one considers how much suffering the inordinate craving for pleasure brings to self and others, but it is not excessively harsh. Far from finding any value in suffering, Buddhism is a concentrated effort to eradicate it from the universe. The same may be said of Jainism, although its monks are committed to a stern asceticism. The notion that the deity is to be approached through suffering is a very primitive element in religion, coming from the era when the gods were conceived as vindictive and jealous of man, like
the ferocious Lord of Hosts, war god of a nomadic Semitic tribe, as we see him in the earlier books of the Old Testament.

"Then you believe that the world would be better without any suffering at all?" Eugene asked.

"It seems," said Mr. Fernley, "that the only reason we can find for desiring suffering for oneself or others is to teach us to avoid conduct that brings pain to self or others, that is, to inculcate wisdom and compassion. But compassion, and even a certain amount of that far more difficult acquisition, wisdom, can be instilled in a well-endowed mind without the experience of suffering, although perhaps not without the knowledge of what pain is. Only the thick-skulled and unimaginative -- those not properly made in the first place -- and those whose training did not begin early enough in life, seem to require suffering to make them compassionate. Even if we concede that suffering has this moral value, we must likewise recognize that its distribution is by no means such as best conduces to this end, and its total amount is vastly more than is required for purposes of catharsis and instruction. Moreover, in a world so organized that suffering was impossible, no one would need to suffer in order to make him careful not to inflict suffering; so I cannot see how this imaginary world would be in any way improved by its introduction."

"Whoever heard of trying to improve a cake or a pudding by adding a repulsive flavor to the ingredients!" exclaimed Mrs. Fernley.

"So you do not think that suffering can be reconciled with
divine providence?" Eugene asked.

"Certainly not in the vast amount in which we actually find it," replied Mr. Fernley, "although the great philosopher Leibniz made a brave attempt to do so. He pointed out that certain goods are necessarily connected with certain evils: one cannot, for example, know the joy of reconciliation without having quarreled with one's friend or lover, or be merciful unless someone deserves punishment. Then he asked us to imagine a benevolent Creator examining all possible combinations of good and evil, and choosing for the world that he was about to create that combination in which the goods are at a maximum and the evils at a minimum -- his famous doctrine of the "best possible world," every evil in which is unavoidable. But I believe that if Leibniz's Creator had proceeded more carefully, he could have found plenty of goods, such as the enjoyment of beauty, truth and friendship, the frolics of children and young animals, and so forth, which were not necessarily associated with any inconveniences that were not trifling; so that he might have made a world far less laden with sorrow than this one."

"If Leibniz had been as candid as he was astute," said Edwin, "he would have admitted that a malevolent Creator chose the worst possible world, containing no good that was not necessary for the perpetuation of its evils, so that he might enjoy the contemplation of suffering for ever."

Everyone looked at Edwin in amazement, never expecting such a remark from him.

"I do not quite follow your reasoning. Will you please
explain," Eugene requested.

"It is simply this: Although a world of pure, unadulterated good is at least conceivable, a world of pure, unmitigated evil is not even theoretically possible; for in such a world no conscious being would have any incentive to continue to exist, and without consciousness there can be no pain or suffering, no evil. So the Creator who delights in the spectacle of suffering was obliged to give creatures just enough pleasures and satisfactions to induce them to remain alive and propagate their species. And being thoroughly malevolent, he allowed them this bare minimum of delights."

The doctrine that the world had been created by an inferior or an evil power, instead of by the Supreme God, was not new to Mr. Fernley, who was aware that it had been held by the Manicheans, the Gnostics, and their spiritual descendants the medieval Cathars. To the rest of the company, however, Edwin's idea of the worst possible world was so novel that they needed time to think it over before they could discuss it intelligently. Soon afterward, they separated to go to bed.

"What can have come over Edwin?" Mrs. Fernley asked her husband when they were alone. "He has been saying such queer things of late. I have never known him to be this way before."

"Edwin is in a depressed state," he replied. "Like the rest of us, he has been under great tension for nearly two months. The few of us who can shoot have been guarding the pass of Thermopylae with inadequate force, and the ever-present possibility that the enemy will invade our little valley by some
other route, cutting off the outpost from its base. Such a situation, continued for weeks, is trying to any soldier, amateur or professional. Then Edwin has watched his brother die in the most distressing circumstances, and his friend sink low, for lack of the medical attention they should have had. He has heard gruesome accounts of the atrocities that have been perpetrated all over the district, more than we have permitted to reach the ladies' ears. He has not been eating properly, and has become thin and irritable. His generous, loving soul is in full revolt against all the injustice and suffering that the world contains, and that is the reason why he comes out with such amazing statements. I can understand his state of mind, because mine was much the same after my return from France at the end of the first World War. But I am confident that he will not remain this way for long. This accursed revolution cannot last for ever; and when it is over, rest, adequate diet, and above all his coming marriage with an exceptionally sweet girl, will restore his spirits."

"I hope so!" exclaimed Edwin's mother. "To have one son dead and the other become a confirmed pessimist, is more than I could bear."

"The most interesting period of a man's life," Mr. Fernley remarked, "is that between the ages of sixteen or seventeen and his early twenties. It is then that he develops the attitudes and the scale of values that will influence all the rest of it, which, in so far as it depends on his own decisions rather than on external events beyond his control, is but a commentary on
what has happened to his mind during this formative period. Or one might compare the man's subsequent life to the growth of an organism whose principal organs were present as rudiments in the embryo. Edwin is now reaching the end of this most critical stage in his spiritual development, and what happens to him in the next year or so, perhaps in the next few months, will determine the whole future course of his life. It is a pity that we could not be closer to him during the formative years through which he has just passed, but we could not have provided all the intellectual stimulation that he has enjoyed at the university."

One may wonder that Edwin, whose period of most rapid intellectual growth had been passed in the era of greatest and most widespread violence in the whole troubled course of human history, should have been so severely affected by a Central American revolution, one of the hundreds of such petty upheavals that had periodically shaken the five republics of this mountainous region in the century and a quarter since they won their independence from Spain. What, measured in terms of suffering and death, was the tragedy that he had just witnessed, what was the whole Costa Rican revolution of 1948, compared with recent events in the larger world? At Hiroshima, three years earlier, the first nuclear bomb ever to be used against an enemy had, in a few seconds, snuffed out several times as many human lives as the whole of El General contained. Hitler's extermination camps had with diabolic efficiency murdered almost as many people as were to be found in the whole of Central
America. In western Europe, in Russia, in northern Africa, in China, in southern Asia and the western Pacific, millions of soldiers had died in combat, millions of civilians had been bombed or starved to death. What Edwin had seen was hardly a drop from the ocean of violence and misery that had spread over the world while he was growing to manhood.

But the drop had touched him as the massive waves of the ocean had not. He was too alert and intelligent, too exposed to all the modern media for bringing the daily news to everyone's attention, not to be aware of what was happening over the whole agonized world during his years in college. But, more from a healthy instinct than by design, he had raised a barrier against it, he had shielded his inmost soul from the full significance of what he read and heard. Had he failed to do this, his education would have suffered and his mental development would have been retarded. His business was to master some of the fundamentals of human knowledge, to acquire principles of interpretation, to learn to think and to evaluate alleged facts. Had he permitted vicarious suffering for a stricken world to drain off some of the energy that he needed for study, he would have become a less valuable citizen of the better world which everyone hoped that peace would bring.

Recent tragic events, however, had touched Edwin so intimately that he could hardly view them with intellectual detachment, as though they had happened to unknown persons in distant lands. He did not merely know about these events, he felt them in his inmost self. They had made a breach in the defensive barrier...
that he had instinctively created around his sensitive spirit; and through this gap the woes of the world rushed in, enlarging it by their passage, as water when it flows through a broken dike, and threatening to overwhelm him by their sheer mass. The hours of solitude that he spent among the fern on the cliff-top, guarding the road up the valley, gave him plenty of time for reflection. All the remembered crimes and brutalities of man's long, unhappy history, all the violence and carnage of the animal world, all sufferings of all sentient beings everywhere, crowded upon his naked, quivering soul and made it writhe in agony.

No, I have been writing nonsense! Imagination is as powerless to reproduce the sufferings of others as memory is to relive our own. Represented suffering is only the thinnest, palest wraith of the reality. But enough of these wraiths had insinuated themselves into the immost sanctum of Edwin's mind to make the world appear a sunless vale of misery and tears.
Chapter 27
AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Early on a sunny afternoon at the end of April, a visitor who was no stranger came unannounced to Selva Alegre, bringing great joy. Violet was the first to see him approaching with saddlebags through the dooryard. She called Elvira, who rushed out to throw her arms around his neck. Her father! safe and sound after almost two months of worrying about what had happened to him. After the first affectionate greeting was over, the others gathered around, hungry for news from the outside world from which they had been cut off for so long, impatient to learn what they could about absent relatives and friends.

Yes, the fighting was over; the revolution was successful; President Picado and ex-president Calderón had fled from the country, along with some of their principal supporters. Many had lost their lives but, thank God! Elvira's mother and sisters were safe and well. Not the least of their anxieties during the past troubled weeks was caused by their continuing ignorance of how the eldest daughter and those who were with her had fared.

El General,

Before coming to Uruña, Don Mariano had thoughtfully called on Mrs. Fernley's eldest brother, and was able to assure her that her mother was well, that her brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, had come safely through the revolution. Their chief losses were some cows which the troops had carried off from her eldest brother's farm.

San Isidro

In the post office in Uruña had been re-opened on the preceding day, and the first mailbags in many weeks had just arrived by
sir. With great consideration, Don Mariano had brought all the
Fernleys' letters, which he now removed from his saddlebag;
but unfortunately he had no room for the large accumulation
of periodicals and books which awaited them in the post office.
To no one was the mail more welcome than to Eugene, who eagerly
tore open a letter from his mother. His whole family had been
in an automobile accident, while returning from a holiday excursions to the country! All had been bruised and cut, but none
had suffered seriously except his sister, whose arm had been
broken, although no lasting injury was expected. The car was
wrecked. From the newspapers, Eugene's family knew that the
part of the country where he was staying had been one of the
centers of the revolution, and they were all worried by the
long absence of news from him. How ironic! Eugene thought. He
had been confident that they were safe in a peaceful country,
and they were doubtless wondering whether he had been killed
in one torn by civil strife. Yet they had been as close to
death as he had been; although, since an automobile accident
is so sudden, they had been spared the mental anguish that he
had known.

From his foreman, Don Mariano had already learned the out-
standing events at Aguas Claras during his absence. But for the
valiant action of Mr. Fernley and Edwin, assisted by old Don
Chico, his daughter might now be dead, his home in ruins. He
had returned to find his daughter unscathed, his home just as
he had left it, not an animal missing from his farm. His generous
heart swelled with gratitude. Only the loss of the boy who
should have been his daughter's brother-in-law cast a shadow of sorrow over his homecoming. He expressed his condolences with the delicacy to which the Spanish tongue lends itself so much better than the English.

"To my great regret," he continued, addressing Mr. and Mrs. Fernley, "I have no son to offer you as a partial replacement of the one you have lost, but I can give you another daughter. As far as I know, the only question that remained to be settled, with reference to her union with your eldest son, was how this was to be effected. I shall no longer oppose their marriage in whatever legally recognized manner they prefer; to do so, after all that I owe to him and you, would be most ungrateful. Elvira's mother shall learn of my decision at the same time that she hears that her daughter is well and the farm undamaged. Her joy on receiving the good news should make her generous and forgiving, and I expect no trouble there, despite the persistent opposition of Padre Benavides to a civil marriage. As a wedding present, I shall pay all the expenses of Elvira's trip to the States, and perhaps I can help them more, if the new government does not cram some crushing taxes on us, as I expect it will, to pay for this wretched revolution."

"Oh, you dear papi!" exclaimed Elvira, radiant with joy.

Edwin thanked Don Mariano, trying hard not to reveal, in this moment of rejoicing, how little this information moved his leaden heart. If his manner was cold and formal, it passed unnoticed in the general excitement.

Edwin's parents were more cordial. They assured Don Mariano
that they already loved Elvira like a daughter, and could think of no more welcome addition to their family. Her presence had been a great comfort to everybody during the anxious times that had just passed. They pressed Don Mariano to stay for supper, but he graciously refused the invitation, saying that they would wish to be alone to read their letters, that his neglected farm needed his attention. His foreman's wife was preparing a meal for him. He took from his saddlebags a few delicacies that he had brought for the Fernleys, as a change from the monotonous diet during the revolution.

Before Don Mariano left, it was arranged that Elvira should pack up her things and move to Santa Teresa in the morning. Violet volunteered to accompany her and help to get the house in order. Meanwhile, the other Fernleys and Eugene would write letters to people who would certainly be wondering what had happened to them. On the second following day, Mr. Fernley, Edwin, Violet and Elvira would ride to San Isidro to post the letters, look for some urgently needed household supplies and, not least, enjoy a change of scene. Mrs. Fernley preferred to remain at home, and Eugene was still not well enough for such a long ride.

It was a beautiful sunny morning, the first in May, when Mr. Fernley, Edwin and Violet set off on horseback down the valley. At Santa Teresa they found Elvira awaiting them, and the four continued along the grassy lane toward Guatita. Although each had passed this way many times before, they rode along in the expectant attitude of travellers in a strange land, not knowing what novelties would greet them. At first, all that
they saw was as they expected it to be at this season. To all the fields and thickets the rains had brought renewed verdure, but there were still few flowers, with the conspicuous exception of the splendid mayo trees, whose golden crowns shone out in the patches of forest that remained in the valley and on the distant wooded hillsides. In the plantations along the roadside, the coffee bushes were laden with swelling green berries; the corn was growing tall in the milpas. Birds were singing or busily gathering food for their young.

Edwin tried to keep the party close together, the talk on impersonal topics. He dreaded to be alone with Elvira, lest she lead their conversation in a direction that would prove painful to both. Before long, the travellers passed the ruins of a burnt house. The nearer they came to Ureña, the more evidence of destruction they saw. The village itself had suffered cruelly. Only a few buildings had been burnt to the ground, and two or three others destroyed by small bombs dropped from commercial aircraft; but nearly all of those that remained standing were damaged in one way or another. Windows were broken, doors unhinged, boards wrenched from the walls, tiles broken, corrugated iron roofs perforated by machine-gunning from the air. The contents of homes and shops had suffered even more than the buildings themselves, for the mercenary troops sent by the government had deliberately destroyed what they could not carry off. The stores had been looted of their merchandise, and on the sidewalk in front of several of them stood little iron safes, their combination locks broken open by firing into them.
at close range. Even the church had not been spared; the sacred images had been destroyed; the edifice itself was severely damaged; the adjoining priest's house had been ransacked.

"Such," remarked Edwin, sadly viewing the wreckage, "was the fate of many a conquered town in ancient times, only it fared even worse. The inhabitants who were not put to the sword were carried off into slavery, and often the city and its walls were systematically levelled to the ground. Sometimes it appears to me that civilisation, after reaching its apex in the relatively peaceful nineteenth century, is in the twentieth descending toward the level of remote antiquity, in all that relates to peace and public security."

Martial law still prevailed in the village. The few short streets were full of the volunteer soldiers of the victorious Opposition, who in a bloody engagement, only a few days earlier, had destroyed or driven off the pillaging hirelings of the fallen Government. These veterans wore no uniform, and were to be distinguished from the civilian population only by the rifles on their shoulders and their blue trench caps with white bands. In front of the jeftura was a long queue of people, waiting to receive the food that had been sent for free distribution from parts of the country that had been less severely stricken. When the mercenaries invaded the village, many of these men and women had fled with hardly more than the clothes on their backs, and they were now destitute, dependent on public aid.

The Fernleys asked about people they knew. Some had disappeared, and it was not yet known whether they were alive or dead;
others would certainly never be seen again. Some of the latter had been forced to stand up by the roadside and were shot down in cold blood by the mercenaries. Mr. Fernley met, limping along the street, an old acquaintance, an honest farmer, who had been captured and tortured so drastically that he doubted whether he would ever fully recover.

When Mr. Fernley went to post the letters and withdraw the second-class mail that Don Mariano had been unable to bring, the young postmaster related how, when the revolution broke out, he had fled, carrying with him all the registered mail. To corroborate his story, he proudly showed the registry book, all stained from having been buried in the moist ground for safety.

Meanwhile Violet, Elvira and Edwin had been searching for things that were needed at home, but without much success. Only two or three small shops on the outskirts of the village had been reopened for business, displaying a meager stock. Of the articles on their list, they found only a spool of thread, and a broom to replace one that had worn out during the revolution. They were not inclined to complain about the paucity of merchandise, for their households were still intact, while nearly everybody around them had hardly more than an empty shell of a house, in need of repairs.

While Mr. Fernley talked to an old friend, the three young people went to look for an acquaintance of Elvira's, who had married some years before and lived in a neat little cottage on a side street. Marta and Carlos, her husband, had just re-
turned from the mountains where they sought refuge, and the young woman was still sobbing over the wreck of her cherished home that greeted her. The floor was covered with pages torn from their few books, pictures that had been pulled from the walls, shattered plates and cups, fragments of glass from the smashed windows, the debris of broken furniture. The clothing they had left behind had vanished, along with their bedding. They considered themselves fortunate to have a bedstead that was still usable, a table with only one broken leg, and a few battered pots for cooking. Carlos insisted that his visitors sit on the bed, while he told the tale of his family's misfortunes, with occasional additions and corrections from his tearful wife. Meanwhile, an ugly little boy played among the wreckage on the floor, making inarticulate sounds.

When the inhabitants began to evacuate the village, Carlos and Marta left along with the rest, carrying their two small children, a boy of three and a girl not quite two years old, together with a blanket and such clothing as they could hold in addition to their living burdens. Two hours of weary trudging under heavy loads brought them to the home of Carlos's parents, in a hamlet five or six miles from Ureña. Here they found refuge for a week, until a surprise attack by the mercenaries who were plundering the valley caused them to snatch up their children and flee into the neighboring woods. When they paused to take stock of their situation, they found themselves separated from the people with whom they had been living, with nothing save the clothes they wore. On the other side of the forested ridge was a small settlement in a more remote
valley, and to reach this seemed their best hope of safety.

The young couple with their two children started to climb
the ridge, but were not sure of the way. Night caught them in
the midst of the forest, without food, without a blanket,
without light or fire, with no shelter but the dripping fol-
iege—with nothing to comfort their two weeping babies. Since
they could no longer see where they were going, they thought it
safer to remain standing, at the base of a great tree where
there was little undergrowth, holding their children in their
arms. This was too exhausting to be long continued; finally,
from sheer weariness, they sank down on the brown fallen leaves,
in mortal fear of a venomous snake, of a prowling jaguar or
puma from the great forests that still covered the higher
slopes of the mountains. At last, they knew not at what hour,
they fell asleep, and did not awake until the birds began to
stir at dawn.

Of the two children, the boy of three was an idiot who
could utter only a few unintelligible sounds. The baby girl,
bright and normal in every way, was the parents’ solace and
delight. But as an unkind fate would have it, the boy, not the
girl, came safely through the night. When there was enough
daylight to see, they noticed a great swelling on her neck,
evidently caused by the bite of some creeping thing, and she
cried inconsolably. As the famished family struggled upward
through the trackless forest, the swelling grew larger and
extended to neighboring regions of her body. The frenzied par-
ents knew not what to do for her. All morning they pushed on-
ward, tripped by creepers, ever and again stopped by a fallen tree that blocked their way and forced them to make a laborious detour. Around midday, they crossed the back of the mountain spur and began a long descent, which at last brought them to the edge of a cleared valley. Far below, near the river, they discerned a solitary cabin, which they reached as the sun sank low. Here a young matron made them welcome, shared her meager supplies of food with them, and found some herbs to prepare a poultice for the stricken baby. All efforts to save her were vain. That night the little girl died, and the next morning a solitary grave was dug for her. In this remote sanctuary, the bereaved parents remained with their idiot son, until they heard that it was safe to return to their home in the village.

In the face of real tragedy, verbal consolation is vapid. But the three visitors gave the bereaved couple such poor words of comfort as occurred to them, and promised to send from their homes some things that would be useful. Then they left, as it was time to find Mr. Fernley and start homeward. Edwin, carrying the new broom as a knight of old might have borne his lance, rode along in pensive silence. What he had seen, and particularly the sad tale he had just heard, strengthened a resolution which for some time had been taking shape in his troubled mind.

Meanwhile, the two young women talked incessantly about the events of the morning, and occasionally Mr. Fernley joined their conversation. When they had proceeded several miles and were riding along a solitary stretch of road, Elvira fell behind the others. Thinking that it would be churlish to leave her alone, Edwin
reined in his horse; while his father and sister, suspecting that the two lovers desired a tête-à-tête, continued onward. When Edwin was riding beside Elvira, she said to him:

"Isn't Father a dear to say that we need not be married by the priest? I was sure that in the end he would not put obstacles in our way."

"Don Mariano is most generous," he said without enthusiasm.

"Certainly we must wait a while out of respect for Harold. How long do you think the period of mourning should be?"

"I don't know."

"What's the matter, Edwin? Do you think it wicked of me to wish to be happy, when so many people are in distress?"

"Happiness is so rare and transient that I suppose everyone must seize it when and as he can. There are always many people in distress. If one refused felicity because others are wretched, no one would ever be happy. Sympathy carried to such an extreme would make the world even more miserable than it is."

"What is the trouble, Edwin? You seem so distant. I am beginning to suspect that someone else has won your heart away from me, although I cannot imagine who it is."

"No, Elvira, I love you as much as ever—not, more than ever before. What we have been through together binds us more closely to each other."

"Then how soon do you think we can have the ceremony? In July? That would allow three months of mourning."

"Elvira, do you think it right for us to marry?"
"Why in the world shouldn't we? We love each other, and our parents desire it."

"Because we might have children."

"I love children, and I thought that you did, too."

"Yes, I love them, Elvira, and that is the reason why I doubt that it is right to bring them into the world."

"I do not follow your reasoning."

"You do not wish those whom you love to suffer, do you?" he asked.

"Of course not. But why should our children suffer?"

"Because this is a world of suffering. In the first place, even parents who seem perfectly normal and healthy in every way sometimes beget children with a dreadful affliction, in mind or in body, like those poor people we visited. And even if a child is born without a handicap, one can never foretell what will happen to it later. Think of all the dreadful things that can befall a person: blindness, deafness, loss of a limb, some terrible lingering illness that neither carries him off nor permits him to live. But what most fills me with misgivings is all the horrible things that man does to man, especially in our time. Remember how many millions of people have died in bombed cities, in battle, in concentration camps, in slave-labor gangs, just since we were born. Certainly nobody with a sense of responsibility would wish to bring children into a world where things like that might happen to them. Heaven forbid that any child of ours should some day reproach us for having exposed him to so much misery!"

Edwin had been forced, by the stipulation that, in order to be married by a priest, he must promise to have his unborn children brought up as Catholics, to think about his responsibility to them. Continued reflection on this important subject, in the light of his recent experiences, had led him inescapably to the conclusion that it would be wicked to bring children into a world where evil so abounds.
"But the bombings and battles and concentration camps that you have been speaking of happened in the Old World," Elvira reminded him. "Here in the Western Hemisphere we are much safer."

"Millions of Americans, including my father, have been compelled to fight and bleed on the battlefields of the Old World. And I cannot agree that we are so much safer here in the Americas. Urrea was bombed within our hearing, and the only reason why they did no more damage was because they could obtain no bigger bombs. Men are now rotting in dungeons in the Dominican Republic, in Venezuela, and elsewhere, because of their political views. The Communists are trying to gain control of all the American republics, and that was one of the causes of this revolution. For the present, they have been forestalled here in Costa Rica; but some day they may succeed. Then it will go hard with everybody who values his liberty and refuses to truckle to a tyrannical oligarchy. Who would wish his children to grow up in a Communist state, surrounded by spies, liable to imprisonment or death for saying what he believes, living in an atmosphere in which duplicity is an asset? The communism of love is beautiful, and I hope that some day men may become good enough to achieve it; but the Communism of power, Soviet style, is abominable."

"I hope that no child of ours is ever enslaved by Communist rule," Elvira declared with fervor.

"And even if our children are sound in mind and limb, and escape all accidents, and remain unharmed by evil men, we may regret that we gave life to them. Certainly we would wish our
children to bless the earth by their presence on it, so that no creature would have cause to lament that they had been born. Yet we cannot guarantee that they will not become a scourge to the earth. Harold was brave and loyal; but the narrowness of his sympathy greatly distressed his parents, who wished him to treat all beings with gentleness and love. And I am sure that parents as good, and as careful of their children's education, as my father and mother, have often had sons far worse than Harold— as Marcus Aurelius, one of the most beautiful characters in history, had the wicked emperor Commodus. Imagine the anguish that we should feel if we afflicted the world with offspring of ours who turned out to be callous or cruel, perhaps even criminals."

They rode along in silence for a while. Elvira was thinking of the story of Carlos and Marta, which had impressed her deeply. She felt the force of Edwin's arguments. At last she said:

"Perhaps you are right, Edwin. Probably it would be better not to marry and beget children who might suffer terribly themselves or bring much suffering to others, possibly their own parents. But if I do not marry you, I shall never marry anyone."

"Nor I anyone but you, Elvira. Let us live all our lives like a devoted brother and sister, loving each other deeply, but never marrying."

"I suppose that is how it must be."

They said little more until they reached Elvira's house. Since none of the men was in sight, Edwin unsaddled her mare and took her to the pasture. Then he remounted his horse and
continued up the valley. Elvira entered the house, dropped into an armchair in the deserted sitting room, buried her head in her arm, and sobbed. In this state her father found her, when he entered the room a short while later. Laying a hand gently on her shoulder, he asked:

"What is wrong, my daughter? Does what you saw this morning distress you? You are thin and run down by what you have been through. Perhaps you should not have taken such a long ride today."

"No, Father, it's not that....We heard some sad tales in Ureña....Edwin and I are not going to marry."

"I thought that was all settled. Has he fallen out of love?"

"He says he loves me more than ever," she replied.

"You no longer care for him, then?"

"I shall always love Edwin."

"What can be the trouble, then?" asked Don Mariano. "I suppose it's money that's worrying him. I can understand that. Marriage is a great responsibility, and he does not wish to marry you until he can keep you in the comfort to which you are accustomed."

"No, it is not money. I am not afraid to live simply with Edwin."

"It's easy to talk that way, but you might think differently when the pinch comes. Whatever in the world is holding you back, then?"

"Edwin thinks it wrong to have children," Elvira confided to him.
"Whoever heard of such nonsense! I thought he was a sensible boy. How can it be wrong?"

"Because their parents may be powerless to shield them from suffering."

"That is true," admitted Don Mariano. "We do the best we can for our children, but we cannot guarantee that they will not suffer. The trouble seems to be that Edwin is suffering himself from the harassing times he has been through. He needs a rest and a change of scene, just as you do. Don't fret! Everything will be right before long. I must talk with him."

"When Edwin makes up his mind that something is wrong, neither heaven nor earth can make him do it."

"The strategy is not to try to persuade him to do something that he believes to be wrong; the proper course is to prove to him that what you desire him to do is right."

"But I am not sure that it is right to marry and bring children into a world where such dreadful things can happen to them. Edwin has a very sensitive conscience, and when he believes that something is wrong, he is generally correct," she said, drying her tears.

"Perhaps he is. Yet I am sure that if he could see you now, looking so sweet in your distress, his stern resolution would melt away."

Meanwhile, Edwin was riding alone up the riverside road. He went slowly, not trying to overtake his father and sister, who were already far ahead. It was a great relief to have disburdened his mind of the thoughts that during the past weeks had been
becoming ever more insistent, yet it pained him to have given
Elvira pain. The sweet gentleness of her acceptance of his re-
nunciation, her declaration of eternal attachment to himself,
intensified his devotion to her. His heart was heavy; the
future looked black. He longed for the consolation of her
presence, the touch of her lips, her breath on his cheek, might
bring him. Suddenly it occurred to him that they might marry,
yet agree to avoid having children. Thereby they might derive
such happiness as they could from their own lives, without
giving hostages whom Fortune might treat outrageously. Yes,
that would be the better way! He wondered whether Elvira's
Catholic upbringing would make her view a deliberately barren
matrimony as sinful.

Elvira would probably object, and she would be right. The
more Edwin thought about this solution of his difficulty, the
less it appealed to him. His recent descent into the abyss of
pessimism had not attenuated what his father had called his
"passion for wholeness and purity." However wicked and charged
with suffering the world might be, he still desired to make his
own life something that he could approve, something that would
not destroy his self-respect. He repeated to himself, grimly,
those stout verses of Henley:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.
Whatever happened, he would cling stubbornly to his determination to make his life whole in all its aspects, as far as he was able. And matrimony without children was not whole. It lacked that shared concern for tender helpless bodies and awakening minds that binds the partners more closely together with the passage of the years. It did not repay to life the debt that it owed to life. It did not provide the full and satisfying experience which the married state should give. Better far than such a truncate matrimony is celibacy, a deliberately restricted way of life which does not pretend to be more than it is. The celibate must seek fulfillments other than those of marriage and parenthood, striving to make his life whole in the narrower sphere that he has elected for himself. Yes, he would remain all his life a bachelor, forever devoted to Elvira, forever yearning toward her, as the tide to the moon that it can never touch. The idea of celibacy freely accepted for a religious motive, as a protest against a too coarse or a too wicked world, was not foreign to her; one of her friends in the city had become a nun. She would understand and appreciate the course that he proposed.

When, a few evenings ago, Edwin had declared that this is the worst possible world, containing no good that is not necessary for the perpetuation of its evil, he was only half in earnest. All that he would seriously have maintained was that this interpretation of an enigmatic universe accords no less with what we know of it than does the opposite and more celebrated hypothesis of Leibniz. Be that as it may, he was,
in his present black mood, convinced that the world is so full of evil that it could well be viewed as the creation of a malevolent deity, who delights in the contemplation of suffering. But in such a universe, whence could come Edwin's own unshakable determination to be true to himself and compassionate toward every other creature? Would not his "passion for wholeness and purity" be an inexplicable anomaly in a universe such as he supposed? How could he justify the kind of life that he intended to lead? Would not a course of dissolve cruelty be more in keeping with his present world view, more logical and consistent? These were questions for which Edwin's philosophy, still inchoate, could as yet provide no answer.
Chapter 28
LIFE’S DENIAL

A few days ago, Edwin had declared that a world of pure, unmitigated evil is inconceivable, because in such a world no conscious being would have any incentive to exist and perpetuate its species, and in the absence of sentient beings that can enjoy and suffer, there can be neither good nor evil. A world of pure evil could never be known or understood by any of its inhabitants, for knowledge presupposes certain harmonies, in the mind of the knower, in the organization of the senses whereby he perceives the external world, and between his thoughts and the reality to which they correspond. Harmony is always good and the antithesis of evil -- for what do we mean by goodness if not harmony and the happiness it brings; by evil, if not disharmony and the pain it causes? The attempt to know and understand the world is an effort to mitigate its evil and produce positive good, even if this good is no more than the enlightened, unflinching contemplation of evil. Hence the world-denying attitude, when from blind unreasoning despair it passes into a more active state and tries to understand itself, becoming philosophic pessimism, proves despite itself that the world contains some sources of satisfaction and some good.

The black mood into which Edwin had gradually sunk during the harassing days of the revolution had not destroyed his intellectual curiosity nor deprived him of the satisfaction which study could bring. In the investigation of nature, in
trying to uncover some of her closely hidden secrets, he could still find consolation and delight. He fervently hoped that this source of gratification would never be denied to him. On the morning after his return from Ureña, he went out early to gather fresh material to study, then sat down to his neglected microscope, determined to make up for the time that he had lost during the past troubled weeks. For hours he sat at his work table, cutting thin sections of tissue with his razor, staining them with safranine, and examining them under high magnification.

In his intense concentration, the hours slipped by unperceived, so that he was surprised and secretly annoyed when he was called for lunch. As soon as he had eaten, he resumed his work, beginning to draw an unusual structure that he had discovered. But now his thoughts reverted increasingly to Elvira, distracting him from his present occupation. Strive as he would to banish her image from his mind, it persisted in obtruding. He wondered whether she had been plunged into sorrow by their renunciation of the preceding day. Perhaps she needed consolation. As soon as he finished his drawing, he would go down to Santa Teresa to see her.

By the time the drawing was completed, rain was falling in torrents, causing the river to rise and roar as it had not done in months. Edwin decided to remain at his microscope, hoping that the following afternoon would be more favorable for his visit. The next morning he resumed his work, but time passed more slowly. Since the revolution began, he had not been separated from Elvira for so many hours together, and he longed to
see her. The afternoon turned out to be sunny, and without taking time to catch and saddle his horse, he set forth on foot down the valley while the sun was still high.

With some misgivings he came into Elvira’s presence, but he noticed no alteration in her attitude toward him. She suggested that they make the best of the pleasant afternoon by taking a walk; and before long they were sitting side by side on the same rock where, nearly five months earlier, they had rested while they planned their lives together, amid the glossy-leafed begonias that had long since ripened and shed their myriad minute seeds. And again the two lovers were planning their lives together — together and yet apart. They would not marry and rear a family, but they would collaborate on a book. The book could never feel pain or sorrow, and since it would propagate no religious or political dogma that might make men intolerant and cruel, it could never become a cause of suffering. No, it would be such a book as could only bring pleasure to refined minds, a book on the lives of flowers. They would painstakingly observe the behavior of many kinds, from the little yellow flowers of the broomweed that last only a few hours to sturdy orchids that may remain fresh for weeks; they would learn the hour of their opening and their closing, how they are affected by the weather, how they are pollinated, how their bright colors are produced. Edwin would write the text and Elvira, who already had some skill in drawing, would perfect her art and illustrate the book with colored paintings. When, after years of patient application, this work was finished, they would begin
another. All their lives they would work together, in a marriage of minds that would be far from barren, yet would give no hostages to outrageous Fortune. And so, childlike in their inexperience and purity of heart, they planned a course which they believed would bring them happiness and perhaps make them useful to their fellows; all unmindful of the severe strain which such a course would impose on their self-control or the malicious gossip to which it might give rise.

Returning to the house as the sun was sinking low, they found Don Mariano resting on the veranda. After cordially greeting Edwin, he said:

"Here is a letter which has just arrived from your mother, Elvira. She wishes you to spend a few weeks in the city with her and your sisters. Things are already quieting down there, and she thinks that, after all you have been through, it will do you good to have a change of air and food, see new faces, and perhaps go to a movie or two. She would be happy if Violet came with you. And she is reconciled to your marriage by a civil ceremony, if that is what you and Edwin desire."

"But who will keep house for you, if I go?" she asked her father.

"Don't worry about me. Old Pacifica will take care of me well enough for a few weeks, and I shall be happy to know that you are having the good time that you deserve. You have been a competent and faithful housekeeper to me for a long while."

"Then, if Edwin doesn't mind, I shall go."

"Don't worry about Edwin, either," commanded Don Mariano,
"Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Isn't that what they say in English?"

When they separated, it was agreed that Edwin would convey Doña Luisa's invitation to Violet, and that Elvira would see her on the morrow, to arrange a date for their journey to the Capital.

That evening, as the family at Selva Alegre sat in the library after supper, Violet asked: "Are you sure you can spare me, Mother? There won't be too much work for you?"

"No, dear. I can make out with Carmen. You go and have a happy time with Elvira. You can visit your grandmother, and your uncles and aunts and cousins, all of whom are always glad to see you. You can tell them that I will visit them before long. Then, while I am away, you can keep house for the men."

"When do you plan to go, Mother?" Violet asked.

"That depends on Edwin's wedding. I do not wish to go to the city more than once before the year's end, so I shall make my visit fit in with the wedding. I suppose that the ceremony, since it is to be civil, will be performed in San José by the governor of this province. When do you and Elvira intend to marry, Edwin?"

"The wedding is off," replied Edwin, trying to sound casual. He felt everybody's eyes upon him.

"How is that? You and she have not quarreled, I hope?"

"No, we agreed quite amicably not to marry. We understand each other perfectly."

"But why not?" insisted Mrs. Fernley. "If you are still in
love, why shouldn't you marry?"

"Because we might have children, and one can never tell what will happen to them or how much they will suffer."

"If your father and I had felt that way, you would never have been born. Wouldn't you be sorry?"

"How could I be, Mother?"

Mr. Fernley smiled. Then Violet and Eugene laughed. Mrs. Fernley looked puzzled, then smiled too.

"You needn't all feel so superior," she said. "You know perfectly well what I meant."

"Yes, Mother," Edwin replied. "If I could not feel sorry not to have been born, I can at least be glad that I was born, and I am grateful to you and Father for the boon of life. But I have been exceptionally fortunate. Aside from the homesickness that I felt when I first went away to school, I did not, until quite recently, know what it is to suffer. And what we have been through these last two months is nothing compared to what countless people have endured in recent years. As the earth becomes more and more crowded, I believe that it will grow steadily worse. We have no reason for complacency ourselves, because, as the Greeks used to say, no man should consider his life happy until he has seen the whole of it. And we can hardly imagine what afflictions will fall on the next generation. What right have we to expose to such dreadful hazards children who never asked to be born?"

"What right have you to deny life, and all the wonderful experiences that it can yield, to children who might be born?"
asked Mr. Fernley.

"If we could guarantee that they would have a full and happy life, we would have no right to deny it to them, and no generous person would wish to do so. The point is that we cannot guarantee that they will be born sound in mind and body in the first place, and we cannot later assure them protection from a thousand terrible hazards."

"I am aware," Eugene remarked, "that unpredictable genetic accidents may occur even in the soundest stock; but I believe that few couples are so likely to produce healthy offspring, and to give them the loving care that they need for a promising start in life, as you and Elvira."

"In a peaceful and stable world," replied Edwin, "a proper start, although certainly no guarantee against disaster, at least provides the probability of a happy life. But in a world that is torn by conflict and deteriorating, it does not even give this probability. On the contrary, the more finely organized his mind and the more acute his sensibilities, the more likely a person is to suffer from what he sees around him, from what may happen to him. And who can doubt that the world is deteriorating? We need only to cast our eyes around us. When I was a little boy, this valley was a magnificent wilderness, with stately forests, and streams that ran almost clear even when swollen by hard downpours. Just look how the forests are dwindling, how a shower converts the rivers into raging torrents of muddy water. Each year, as more of the watershed is denuded, the flash floods become higher and more destructive. People have
been pouring into this valley, settling on land too steep and poor for sustained agriculture. Already the early settlers are dying and dividing their holdings between their numerous children. These children in turn have many offspring, among whom their smaller plots of impoverished land will some day be divided. The splendid wilderness is becoming a rural slum. More and more people are trying to live on land less and less able to support them, with the result that their children grow up undernourished, ill-educated for all the government can do to provide schools, prone to crime, tinder to be ignited by any incendiary agitator that the Communists may send among them. The same thing appears to be happening all over the Americas. Before long, life will be as difficult here as in densely packed India or China; but I doubt whether these people will endure their misery as patiently as the Orientals. There are certainly difficult and perilous times ahead for everybody."

"But just because there is such a rising flood of people who are deficient in education, discipline, love and ideals," said Eugene, "it seems to be the duty of those who can produce superior children to give them to the world, so that they may lead it to better times."

"And what," Edwin asked, "has been the usual reward of those who have most earnestly tried to save men from the consequences of their own violent passions, ignorance and folly? Have they not commonly been misunderstood, neglected, reviled, or more actively persecuted? Have they not suffered acutely from the
ineffectiveness of their efforts to improve mankind, even when they have not been burnt, crucified or shot? And, cruellest irony of all, their doctrines, when tardily accepted, have too often been twisted to support the lust for power, until messages of love and peace become the causes of cruel wars and fearful persecutions, and one may well ask whether human history would not have been happier if some of humanity's most influential teachers had never lived."

"We were talking not long ago," said Mr. Fernley, "about the significance of the Crucifixion. The traditional interpretation, according to which the Son was immolated as a peace-offering to a vengeful Father, is so derogatory to God that no man who has a proper concept of deity can accept it. And we could not discover that Jesus deserved to suffer for his own faults, or that his character was in any way improved by the Passion. Perhaps we have all missed the true message of Calvary. Might it not be simply this: that unless the best and most blameless of men, who do not deserve to suffer and whose character can hardly be improved by suffering, will freely accept suffering for the sake of their fellow men, mankind can never be saved from its own ignorance and folly? And since Jesus was, on the theological view, both God and the son of God, we might say that the message of the Crucifixion is that good men must accept suffering both for themselves and their children, if humanity is to be raised to higher levels. This, I believe, is the one possible interpretation of Christ's agony that saves it from being either an instance of useless suffering or a sacrifice to a cruel deity whom a brave, self-respecting man could neither
love nor worship."

"Can you find support for that interpretation in the New Testament?" asked Eugene.

"Probably better support can be found in the account of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, which is the prophecy that seems to have prompted Jesus to offer himself for crucifixion. But that is a minor consideration. I hold it permissible for each generation to reinterpret, in the light of its own development and in accordance with its own spiritual needs, ancient myths and legends, and events of perennial interest such as the death of Socrates, the renunciation of the Buddha, or the crucifixion of Christ. Such things have become the common property of mankind, and perhaps their chief value lies in the variety of significant interpretations to which they lend themselves. What does seem _wrong_, and a violation of all historical propriety, is to attribute to one age the interpretation that is made by a very different one, as if we should ascribe to Christ's contemporaries the interpretation of the Crucifixion that I have been proposing."

Edwin went to the door and looked out at the starry night, perfumed by the fragrance of some tree flowering in the neighboring forest. After an interval of deep reflection, he returned to his chair and said: "That is the most sensible interpretation of the Crucifixion that I have heard, and the one that brings the most inspiring message to modern man. A generous man who loves his fellow creatures would, no doubt, accept the suffering that seems inseparable from any attempt to improve them in a
large way, if he had the requisite confidence in his ability to do so --and a very unusual degree of self-confidence, perhaps a touch of paranoia, seems necessary to persuade a man that he will succeed where so many have failed. But although one may consent to his own suffering in a worthy cause, I believe that it would be wrong to beget children in the expectation that they will accept suffering for humanity's sake. We expect too much of future generations. Our ancestors have permitted the world to get into a terrific mess; the present generation seems incompetent to straighten it out; yet we never cease to hope that the next generation will accomplish the miracle that their forebears have consistently failed to perform. The saddest part is that each year the task of making a human world of which a self-respecting man could be proud becomes more stupendous, because there are so many more men to be straightened out, and international relations become ever more complex in consequence of the breakdown of isolation by modern means of communication. Some people expect future generations to become better and more capable through progressive evolution; but they forget that evolution at best proceeds with almost imperceptible slowness, while the complexity of human problems has been increasing very rapidly, with the result that we must become ever more incompetent to solve them. I believe that the responsible man who would, as Gene recommends, deliberately decide to beget and educate a few children, as a counterbalance to the immense flood of babies that thoughtless, irresponsible people are pouring into the world, would be treating his children most
crusely. Elvira and I have decided never to be guilty of that."

"I am amazed to hear you speak that way, Edwin," exclaimed his mother. "I thought that you had compassion for the sufferings of all creatures, and ardently desired to do whatever you could to relieve them."

"What I have seen and thought of late has made me realistic," Edwin replied. "If I had children, I should expect them to be careful to inflict no avoidable injury on any being, and I should be extremely disappointed if they were cruel or thoughtless in their treatment of even the humblest creature. That much each of us can do, in this effort bringing out the best that is in him and realizing his own higher self. Around our homes we can establish a little island of peace and good will, and know the happiness that comes from loving everything that is worthy of love. But to expect one's children to reform humanity or any considerable portion of it, so that men will inflict less suffering on each other and far less on the animals that surround and are dependent on them, is to expect the next generation to do what we cannot ourselves do, which is most unfair. Your suggestion, Gene, reveals the generosity of your mind, but I believe that you hope for too much from the more enlightened portion of the next generation. One should beget children because he believes they will lead joyous, satisfying lives, diffusing love and good will around them, not so that they may suffer and fail in a task that is too big for them."

"Your distinction, Edwin, between not being oneself a cause of pain, and being able to relieve the sufferings of the larger
world, is a good one. You have made a strong point," Mr. Fernley said.

"Then you are still determined not to marry?" asked Violet.

"Not until someone can hold forth a better prospect for our children's continuing welfare than has yet been given," he replied.

"I am disappointed," said Mrs. Fernley. "Not long ago I had three chances of becoming a grandmother. Now only one chance is left."

"And that chance is slight," Violet said. "Poor Elvira! How disappointed and unhappy she must be! Tomorrow I must try to comfort her."

"I hope," Edwin said, "that you do not suppose that I am happy about the situation. Elvira and I are taking this course because we believe it to be the right one, even though we must suffer. And it all goes to support my contention that this is such a world as might have been created by a malevolent deity who delights in the spectacle of suffering. He has bound creatures so firmly to the wheel of existence that they cannot escape from it, except at the price of much additional suffering."

"Which is a truth that religion has quite generally recog-

nized," Mr. Fernley added. Then, after a thoughtful pause, he continued: "I am not sure, Edwin, that you and Elvira are right in refraining from marriage because your children might one day be exposed to hardship and suffering. But I am certain that if all young people would take the responsible view of marriage and probable parenthood that you two do, this world would before long become a much happier place to live in. Your motives do you credit."
In civilized societies, such as the Roman world under the emperors, unchecked political and social conditions have been marked by a decline in the birth rate of the more cultivated class. When a thoughtful man decides to marry and have children, he expresses his confidence in his world, and his approval of the society in which he lives. He who regards the world as fundamentally evil, or who vehemently dislikes the customs of those who surround him, hesitates to expose those whom he will love to the terms which oppress him or the social usages that repel him. One who resists settles into the domestic state and yields to humdrum property to the demands of a revolutionary at heart. Although the difficulty of providing for his dependents may drive him to join a revolutionary movement in the hope of improving their condition.
"Which is a truth that religion has quite generally recognized," Mr. Fenley remarked. Then, after a thoughtful pause, he added: "I am not sure, Colwin, that you and Eliza are right in refusing from marriage because your children might one day be exposed to hardship and suffering. But I am quite certain that if all young people would take the responsible view of marriage and probable parenthood that you two do, this world would certainly become a far happier place to live in. Your motives do you credit."
Chapter 29

A DISCOVERY

In the rainy month of May, nature was in her most exuberant mood. On brilliant mornings when fleecy white clouds floated in the bluest of skies, the air seemed saturated with golden sunshine and some subtle, invisible elixir of fertility. The fresh new foliage of trees and shrubs had reached its fullest luxuriance, smothering the earth in greenery. Plants that had flowered in the dry season were now ripening their fruits. Butterflies of many colors floated through the balmy air, and lesser insects swarmed in bewildering variety. With ripening berries and abundant insects, the birds had no difficulty gathering enough food for their insatiable young, which they were rearing in crannies in trees or banks and in nests of many forms, hidden amid foliage or hanging conspicuously on slender twigs difficult for enemies to reach. Now the cultivated trees began to yield their bounty, beginning with the avocados, which had flowered at the beginning of the dry season, then the juicy cashews, and mangos which set no fruit if their myriad little flowers are touched by rain. The vegetable garden that the Fernleys had planted after April's showers soaked the ground also began to produce, first the swiftly springing mustard, Chinese cabbage and radishes, later cucumbers, peas, green beans and okra. The more varied diet improved everyone's health and spirits, and before long the last of Eugene's ugly sores had healed.
After Violet and Elvira left for the city, Edwin worked steadily at his research. He was systematically exploring every organ and tissue of the tall wild plantain that he had chosen for study, from the roots which absorb its water from the ground to the leaves which manufacture its food and the flowers that perpetuate the species. Each part, when examined under the microscope, presented cells of diverse kinds arranged in different patterns that were often of great symmetry and beauty. He had traced the course of the bundles of wide vessels, strengthened by delicate spiral bands, which conduct the water from the roots up to the huge leaves. He had counted the myriad tiny pores on the lower side of each leaf, which admit air to the green cells that synthesize the plant's food, and he had made drawings of the twin cells which guard each minute orifice, opening and closing it to regulate the inflow of air and the escape of the vital water vapor. Now he turned his attention to the long, dangling inflorescence, a bizarre structure, flattened and spirally twisted, composed of thick, furry, dull red bracts that overlapped each other in opposite rows. Within the folded bracts the hairy yellow flowers were borne.

These flowers puzzled Edwin greatly. They had the long, tubular form of other heliconia flowers, but instead of being almost straight they were strongly downcurved. What was the significance of this curvature? Edwin was too good a naturalist lightly to dismiss any unusual structure as a meaningless "whim of nature." Nearly always it serves some useful function, but this function is often difficult to discover. In flowers,
peculiar forms are usually related to special methods of pollination, although sometimes they serve to keep the pollen dry or to prevent the access of unserviceable insects. Wild-plantain flowers are often pollinated by hummingbirds, especially by the long-billed, dull-colored, shade-dwelling species called "hermits." Edwin was familiar with several kinds of hermits, but none had bills as strongly curved as the yellow flowers. He spent many hours sitting amid a clump of the giant herbs, far taller than himself, waiting for the arrival of a pollinator, bird or insect, whose structural peculiarities might explain the flowers' curvature. Frequently a hermit came to poise beside a dangling inflorescence; but instead of inserting its bill into the flowers to suck the nectar, it probed the spaces around the flowers, inside the red bracts, evidently finding insects or their larvae. It failed to provide the explanation that he sought.

At last his patience was rewarded. One morning while he sat motionless beneath the huge, upright wild-plantain leaves, a hummingbird flew up and alighted on a twig a few yards from him. He had not known that such a hummingbird existed. What first attracted his attention was its bill, long and rather heavy, nearly black in color, and so strongly curved that the tip pointed almost straight downward. From time to time, the bird stuck out its slender white tongue, which had almost the same curvature as its bill. In plumage, this hummingbird was rather undistinguished, with a bronzy green back, a sharply pointed tail edged
and tipped with white, and a light-colored breast covered by a network of dark streaks.

Edwin waited motionless, almost breathless with expectancy. His active mind, running ahead of his observations, had already solved the mystery of the curved flowers, but the proof which a scientist demands was still lacking. Presently the hummingbird bestirred itself, flew to a dangling inflorescence, clung to a fleshy red bract, and inserted its sickle-shaped bill into a sickle-shaped flower. After clinging for a few moments while it sucked the nectar, it withdrew its bill, dusted with the whitish pollen, and went to another flower, then another, each of which it visited in the same fashion. Each time it clung beside the flower instead of hovering on rapidly beating wings, as hummingbirds usually do while sipping nectar. Edwin noticed that its legs were remarkably stout for a hummingbird of its size. Evidently its legs, no less than its bill, had been modified to facilitate its visits to the strongly curved flowers. It was impossible to tell whether the flower had assumed its peculiar shape so that it might be pollinated by the bird, or the bird had acquired its peculiar features so that it might draw nectar from the flower. Probably the floral tube and the white-tipped sicklebill's hummingbird’s bill had increased their curvature together through the generations. Edwin wondered how many thousands of years this mutual adaptation of bird and flower had required.

Edwin was elated. The true naturalist, happy merely to be close to nature, is lifted to the seventh heaven by the disclosure of one of nature’s secrets. To a young naturalist at the out-
set of his career, a fresh discovery brings the highest exultation. Not for weeks had Edwin felt so well and happy. He could hardly wait to tell Eugene what he had found. That same afternoon, he led his friend to the clump of wild plantains. Before they had waited long, the sickle-billed hummingbird returned to the flowers, which it seemed to regard as its private preserve, for it chased other hummingbirds away. It was a species new to Eugene, too, but he wrote a careful description which would serve to identify it later.

When Edwin went to bed that night, he felt that the joy which a single day had brought compensated for all the sorrows and tribulations of the weeks that had passed. No, it actually outweighed them, and he believed that he would agree to live through another equally harassing period, if that were the price he must pay for another such triumphant day. He was reminded of something that he had read, but in what book he could not at once recall. He fell asleep trying to remember the title; and when he awoke next morning, he knew that it was Miss Mulock's *John Halifax, Gentleman*. Before dressing, he took the volume from the shelf and turned the pages until he found a marked passage, which read: "One bright, brief season of joy can outweigh, in reality, and even in remembrance, whole years of apparently interminable pain." His own experience was now confirming this assertion, which at first he had viewed sceptically, as a pious wish rather than an established fact. He marvelled at the organization of the human mind, which of late he had inclined to regard as far more susceptible to pain than to de-
light, yet which, when healthy, preserves the memory of its joys so much more tenaciously than its sorrows, which treasures the beautiful sights it has seen but covers the ugly ones with oblivion's dark veil. Certainly, thought Edwin, any serious attempt to decide whether life's joys or sorrows predominate, must take into account not only the immediate effects of all our varied experiences, but also how they affect memory, where the event which passes in an hour is preserved for many years.

Edwin wrote to Elvira, telling of his discovery and making it more understandable by sketches. Not only was it a valuable addition to his material for his doctoral dissertation, but it would also serve for their projected book on the lives of flowers.
Chapter 30
THE CHILDREN'S VISIT

In the middle of May, Elvira wrote that she would stay in the city longer than she had intended, because her mother was ill and needed her. The same post brought a letter from Violet, announcing that she would arrive in a few days with her two little cousins, Margaret and Arthur. She had persuaded their mother to let her bring them back to spend ten days with their aunt Hazel. They were children of Mrs. Fernley's younger brother, Reginald Gilman, who had married rather late in life. Nearly eight and a half years old and Arthur was seven. They were delightful children, vivacious yet obedient, and all the Fernleys looked forward with pleasure to their visit.

The village, Edwin rode to town, leading three horses, to bring back his sister and cousins. He found Violet with more color in her cheeks than when she left, and thought that a fortnight in a cooler climate had benefitted her health. The children, who had seen little of Edwin, were at first shy of him. He helped them into the saddle and adjusted the stirrup straps to their short legs. They had rarely ridden before and were slightly timid of the big horses, but Edwin assured the children that they were gentle and would obey a touch of the reins. Before they had gone half a mile, the young cousins were enjoying their ride as a great adventure and chatting with Edwin like old friends. When he asked what they most wished to do on the farm, they replied that they wanted to bathe in the river and see the animals in
the forest. Arthur desired above all to watch the monkeys, which he had never seen in their native woodland. Margaret asked about the tinamou, a name which struck her fancy. Edwin explained that they are dull-colored birds, with stout bodies and scarcely any tails, that walk over the ground seeking their food.

There were two kinds at Solva Alegre, a little one about the size of a pigeon that lives in dense thickets and weedy plantations, and a big one the size of a large hen that lives in the high forest. Their big, glossy eggs are the loveliest that any bird lays, but hard to find. Both kinds of tinamous are shy and difficult to see, but he would try to show them to her. And he promised that she would hear their beautiful songs.

The presence of the children at Solva Alegre made everybody feel younger. Mr. and Mrs. Fernley, Edwin, Violet and Eugene took turns keeping them amused. Edwin wished that he could spend all his time with them, and sometimes his conscience pricked him for stealing so many hours from his research. He rode with them up into the hills, showing them toucans whose huge, brightly colored bills and clumsy ways amused them greatly. Nearly every day, he and Violet took them to the river and taught them to swim. On Sunday there was a riverside picnic, attended by all the Fernleys, Eugene, and the two little cousins, who did full justice to the good things that Mrs. Fernley and Violet had prepared. On rainy afternoons, several, and sometimes all, of the older people would join the children in playing one of the games which Mrs. Fernley had carefully kept after her own chil-
dren had outgrown them: old favorites like dominoes, lotto and parcheesi. Or else Mr. Fernley would read to them from a story book that had delighted his own children.

One day, as Edwin, Violet and the children were approaching the river where they swam, they heard a sharp, bird-like note repeated again and again. Edwin told them to advance carefully, and when they came in view of the water they saw an otter resting on a boulder in mid-stream. Its short, grayish brown hair glistened with water, which trickled down the side of the rock. It barked a little more, then slipped into the river anddisported with two other otters who now appeared. They swam beneath the water, now and again raising their sleek, flat heads above the surface to breathe, and from time to time climbing out on a rock only to dive into the water again, just for fun, it seemed. All were quite friendly and often touched each other. The children were delighted, and Arthur wished that he could catch one of the otters and tame it for a pet. Edwin said that to catch an otter he must learn to swim and dive better than it did. Margaret reminded him that even if he could catch one of the animals, it would bite his hands. When they entered the water, they pretended they were otters—but otters who did not like to immerse their heads.

Often, on their way to bathe, the children saw basilisk lizards, which amused them immensely. They ranged in size from babies a few inches long to elders two feet in length, impressive with high, thin crests on the back of the head, down the middle of the back, and on the basal half of the long, thin
tail. There was a pale yellow stripe along either side of the lizard's grayish green or grayish brown body. If the children surprised a basilisk foraging in the riverside pasture, it would rise on its stout hind legs and, holding its smaller forelegs above the ground and using its tail as a balance, scuttle back to the water as fast as it could go. Often the lizards sunned themselves on a rock that rose above the channel or jutted out from the bank, and if disturbed they would run across the surface of the water to the farther shore, holding their forelegs up and using their long, spreading toes to sustain themselves.

When Arthur asked how the lizard could run over the water without sinking, Edwin directed him to slap the river hard with his open hand. Instead of yielding, as when he pressed it gently, the water resisted the sudden blow and stung the boy's hand. Then he understood how the lizard's long toes held it up while it was running fast, even if Edwin's explanation about 'inertia' was beyond his grasp. Edwin said that the basilisk ate ripe coffee berries and other kinds of fruit, and sometimes climbed up to the birds' table to steal their bananas. Occasionally it caught a minnow in the shallows.

When Edwin relaxed, he liked nothing better than to play with children, for he believed that only they know how to play. To participate, directly or sympathetically, in the games and frolics of children, is to disburden our souls of sordid cares and to cherish activity for its own sake rather than for the profit that it may bring us. A healthy child's lightsome spirit needs no strong stimulant to exhilarate it. He plays for the
joy of the game, not for the prize or acclaim that victory in a contest may win for him. To feel the motions of his limber limbs, to encounter the surprises which games can bring, to roam unrestrained in the realm of fancy—these for the child are pure delights, precious for themselves rather than for anything beyond themselves to which they may lead. In the spontaneous world of the child, means are not, as in ours, separated from often distant ends, but are one with their ends; the minutes and hours of life are not counters to be exchanged for some future reward, but each is cherished for its own sake. To exist as a child, in its happiest moments, is to feel that the play of body and mind is immediately rewarding, that to live is a joyous experience.

Yet Aristotle’s dictum that children, like animals, cannot be happy was widely accepted by the ancient philosophers. Had these wise men of old passed an unhappy childhood, or had they forgotten what it is to be young? Or had they, as was their privilege, too narrowly defined happiness as the virtuous activity of rational beings? This much, however, may be said in favor of their contention: that the happiness of rational men who live according to principle is far less precariously established than that of children, and may survive in circumstances that would wither the child’s spontaneous joy, which depends above all on his animal spirits and vanishes when they sink. Yet, while it lasts, the child’s joy is the purest of all, for it owes nothing to future prospects but is the flowering of the
passing moment—the only instant of time that anyone can call his own.

One evening, when at the conclusion of the afternoon shower the setting sun broke through the dark clouds and traced a brilliant double rainbow above the verdant hills beyond the river, everyone went into the forest to hear the vesper chorus of the great tinamous. As the shadows deepened in the undergrowth, a full, pure organ note floated out of the distance. Then, from closer at hand, came a series of similar notes, powerful but soft and mellow, tinged with melancholy yet somehow exultant—the incomparable song of the tinamou. Answering songs sounded from various parts of the darkening forest, then the nearest tinamou again poured forth swelling notes which suggested the velvety smoothness of a horse's nose. Edwin thought that if these notes could penetrate to the innermost depths of the children's souls, they would lodge there all their lives, making them constant friends and protectors of the lofty mysterious forest where alone the great tinamous dwell, so that its destruction spells their death. The soul-stirring melody that they had heard seemed too precious to be often repeated. By the time the bats were fluttering between the tall trunks, the tinamous had fallen silent, each perching safely on a branch high above the ground over which it had walked all day. But in the middle of the night, long after the children had fallen asleep, one awoke and sent its powerful notes coursing through the moonlit woodland.

Edwin's description of the tinamous' eggs had made Margaret
eager to see them, but, as he had told her, they are by no means easy to find. Mr. Fernley offered a reward for the discovery of a nest and, after a few days, Lalo came to claim it. He led Mr. Fernley and the children into the forest, and after they had walked a long way over a little-used trail, he cautioned them to advance stealthily. The children’s untrained eyes could not at first pick out the big, brownish bird sitting amid the brown fallen leaves, between two projecting buttresses at the base of a tall trunk. Presently Margaret detected the tinamou’s large, dark eyes; then the rest of its stout body took shape. It sat facing into the trunk, seeming quite at ease, but ready to shoot explosively into the air if its visitors came nearer. Mr. Fernley said that it would be better not to disturb the bird, lest it desert its nest. They must try to return at a time when the parent tinamou had gone to seek food, leaving the eggs exposed.

As they walked homeward through the forest, they noticed three coatis climbing among the tops of some medium-sized trees near the path. These animals active by day much resemble their nocturnal relative, the raccoon, but they are slimmer and more graceful, with longer snouts and tails. Although the coati often hunts high in the trees, when alarmed by man it always tries to reach the ground. When they saw Mr. Fernley and the children below them, two of the three coatis climbed down the tree trunks head first, then scampered off through the undergrowth with their tails waving above their backs. The third, who was smaller than the others, was slower in gaining the
ground; and to permit the children to see more of it, Mr. Fernley tried to keep it in the trees. Whenever the coati started to descend a trunk, he hurried to its base. Seeing its retreat cut off, the animal climbed up again, crossed over through the branches and vines to another tree, and started down its trunk, only to find that here, too, it was approaching a man. Four times it came halfway down a trunk, then turned back when it saw that its path was blocked. The fifth time that this happened, the coati became so excited that it leapt down from a height of about twenty feet, then ran after its companions. Margaret feared that the poor coatomundi had hurt itself by jumping down from such a great height, but Mr. Fernley pointed out that it had run off as though uninjured.

Next morning, Mr. Fernley and the children returned and found that the tinamou was absent from the niche at the foot of the tall trunk. On a few fallen leaves between the projecting roots lay four eggs, the bluest, the glossiest, and almost the biggest that the children had ever seen. They stood a few yards off, gazing at them with delight.

"What lovely eggs!" exclaimed Margaret. "Oh, how I wish I could take one!"

"Each of you can take them all; but you must not touch them, for your hands might leave a scent that would attract prowling animals who would eat them."

"But how can each of us take all of them, if neither of us can touch them?" she asked, perplexed.

"You must look at them very hard, until you can close your
eyes and see them just as plainly as you now do. Then you will have them in your minds, where they cannot be broken or lost, but will stay fresh and glossy and blue as long as you live. Yet the eggs will hatch to make more tinamous, to sing to us in the evenings and lay more beautiful eggs."

"What a good idea! Let's try it, Arthur," said Margaret.

After looking at the beautiful eggs as long as they wished, the children started homeward with their uncle. Whenever they closed their eyes, the blue eggs shone brightly beneath their lids.

Although Margaret and Arthur were not permitted to touch the tinamous' eggs, the forest yielded other souvenirs in the form of curious seeds, which they could gather from the ground and carry home. Those which pleased them most were the great flatish seeds of the entada vine, each as large as the palm of their hand, with a hard, glossy, dark brown coat. By cutting off the top of a seed and scooping out the contents, it could be made into a little box for holding smaller seeds. The pod which bore these big brown seeds resembled a gigantic, flattened bean pod, as long as Margaret. It was produced by the stoutest, most aggressive liana of the forest, which climbed up to spread its leaves over the crowns of the tallest trees, almost smothering them with foreign foliage. Its main stems, thick as the children's bodies, resembled tree trunks that were too soft and flexible to stand erect, so that they hung like cyclopean ropes from the larger trees or sprawled along the ground.

At night, after Margaret and Arthur had gone to bed, one
of the older people told them a story. In the shady pasture, the children had seen a beautiful bird with a long and peculiar tail. Violet invented a story about this bird, which her young hearers enjoyed so much that they asked for it again on their last night at Selva Alegre. A tale of the days when El General was still wild and sparsely populated and without a single motorcar because no highway joined it with the rest of Costa Rica, it was called

THE GIFT OF THE MOTMOTS

Carlos Gamboa sat on a bench in front of his family's thatched cabin, his back against the wall of rough, unpainted boards, listening to the clamor of a mountain torrent and gazing idly at the long, forest-scarred slopes that surrounded the narrow, tropical valley. He was tired, for he had walked that morning to the nearest village with a bunch of plantains and three dozen eggs, to pay for the salt, candles, matches, and other small household necessities that he brought back from the store. It was eight miles each way, a long walk for a barefoot lad of fourteen carrying a load. But the strenuous life of a new settlement amid the forests had made him strong for his years.

Presently Canelo, limp ing around the corner of the cabin to crop the grass in the front yard, caught the boy's deep brown eyes. Poor Canelo! He was old now, and lame, and for two months had been unfit for work. Yet in his day he had been a good horse, and before Carlos could walk had brought him, a babe wrapped in a scarlet blanket and held in his mother's arms, over the long, rough trail across the mountains and down into the valley of the Aguas Claras, where his family had come to claim a tract of
wilderness and make a homestead.

Now, while the boy sat resting from his long walk, he thought how pleasant it would be to have a strong young horse to ride to the village, instead of trudging all the way on foot. But Carlos's parents could not afford a new horse to replace Canelo. The lad looked down at his mended blue trousers, through which his white skin showed at the knee, and his gray shirt with a neat white patch where he had ripped it while passing through a barbed-wire fence. Already he knew how hard it was to earn money. He rarely lacked food, for his father's new land yielded abundant crops of maize and beans, bananas, cassava, and plantains. But there was hardly ever enough money to buy the clothes, utensils, and tools that his family needed.

Presently a horseman came up the road, riding a roan mare and leading a second horse at the end of a rope. The latter, hardly more than a colt, had a white star on his forehead, and white front feet, which he lifted with spirit as he trotted.

"Look, Mama!" exclaimed Abel. "What a beautiful horse Don Tino has brought! Where do you suppose he got him?"

"He probably traded something else for him. Don Constantino is always trading horses and cattle and pigs and farms, and he makes money on every deal."

"If I had a horse like that, it would be a pleasure to go to the village for the things we need. What do you think he is worth?"

"Maybe three hundred colones," replied Doña Flora, "more than we can pay for a horse."
Soon Don Memo, Carlos' father, called the boy to come and help bring in the newly harvested beans that had been drying on a piece of canvas in the sunshine. Before long, the lad forgot Don Tino's new horse.

On an afternoon a few weeks later, Carlos was walking along the roadway in front of Don Constantino's house when he heard someone call his name. Looking around, he saw Don Tino standing on the porch, beckoning to him, and approached to learn what the man wanted.

"Buenas tardes, Carlos," said Don Tino. "Would you like to earn a solon? My daughter is ill and I need someone to bring medicine from the village. You may take one of my horses."

"With much pleasure, Don Tino," replied the boy, glad of the opportunity to have a ride and earn a solon.

"You had better take the new bay horse," continued the man. "He is swift, and we need the remedy promptly."

In ten minutes the horse was caught and saddled. After the stirrups of Don Tino's saddle had been raised to accommodate Carlos's shorter legs, the boy jumped on and was on his way. What a pleasure to ride such a horse, instead of trudging on foot with a load on one's shoulders! In an hour, Carlos reached the village, gave Don Tino's note to the druggist, received a small package from him, then started homeward. When he dismounted before Don Tino's door, he was convinced that nothing could make him happier than to own a horse like this.

"Would you sell the bay horse?" Carlos found courage to ask Don Tino next time they met.
"Yes, he's for sale."

"How much do you want for him?" asked Carlos, surprised at his own boldness.

"Two hundred and seventy-five colones. He's really worth more, but I'll let you have him at that price."

Don Tino agreed that Carlos could take the horse if within six months he could pay half the price and promised to pay the rent in the following six months.

When this arrangement had been made, Carlos went to the pasture to look once more at the horse he hoped would soon be his. What a handsome animal he was! Nearly every afternoon, after his day's work was done, the boy came with a gift for the horse. Now it was a lump of brown sugar, now a handful of salt, now a few ripe bananas, now a pocketful of maize, now a length of sugar cane, all of which the animal eagerly accepted. Soon he learned to recognize the lad's whistle, and on hearing it would answer with a joyous neigh and come trotting down the hillside pasture. A close friendship grew up between the barefoot boy and the bay horse, whom he decided to call Príncipe.

Meanwhile, Carlos worked hard, and denied himself the small luxuries in which he had formerly indulged on his visits to the village. Nevertheless, as the sixth month drew to an end, he was still far short of the sum he needed for the first payment. He feared that Don Tino would sell Príncipe to somebody else.

About this time a stranger named Mr. Lawrence Taylor arrived at Aguas Claras to collect animals for a museum in the north. Not only did he spend many hours each day roaming through the forests
and thickets with his gun, but he offered to buy desirable specimens from the local people, who called him Don Lorenzo. Birds, which he skinned and stuffed with cotton, were among the objects for which he paid most liberally. Carlos thought that he might increase his fund for buying Principe by bringing specimens to him. Neither he nor his father owned a firearm, but after much searching he succeeded in borrowing an old-fashioned gun for a few days.

Next morning, after he had finished his usual chores, Carlos shouldered the gun and set out for the rain forest on the ridge that rose steeply behind his cabin. As he neared the woodland's edge, a toucan with a fiery orange bill shot out from the trees above him and flew toward a tall, charred trunk that remained standing in the clearing. With a thumping heart, Carlos raised his weapon, took hasty aim, and fired. The brilliant bird never wavered in its swift flight. "Ah, well," thought Carlos as he laboriously reloaded his gun, "I'll do better with a perching bird."

As Carlos passed along a cowpath through the tangle of bushes and vines at the forest's edge, a whir of wings drew his attention to a bird who seemed to rise from the ground close beside him. Alighting in a sapling at no great distance from the boy, it looked at him with large red eyes. Its strange loveliness made him forget the gun in his hands. Larger than the brown thrushes that sang sweetly in the valley, it was clad in softly blended shades of green and rufous. A band of bright blue encircled its black crown above its eyes. What most fascinated Carlos was the bird's long, slender tail, unlike the tail of any feathered creature that
he had ever seen. At the end were two small, oval pieces, connected with the rest of the tail feathers by thin stalks.

While Carlos watched the beautiful bird, another of the same kind flew up from the ground and alighted near it. The second bird's strong black bill was dusted with red clay, as though it had been digging. Looking down, the boy noticed a deep pit, from which these blue-diademed motmots had evidently emerged. This ridge was the burial ground of the Indians who many years earlier had dwelt in the valley below. Some of the graves had been opened by the recent settlers, who sought the gold ornaments that the Indians had buried with their dead.

Approaching the edge of the pit, Carlos saw that it was as deep as he was tall. In the bottom he noticed a mound of freshly loosened earth, and in the vertical wall directly above it was a round hole that appeared to be the entrance of a tunnel. It seemed that the motmots were digging a burrow for their eggs and young.

When Carlos looked up from the pit, the motmots had flown off through the bushes; he heard them calling to each other with deep, hollow notes. Perhaps, if he hid amid the dense foliage and waited, they would return to their work, and he could shoot them for Don Lorenzo. No, he thought, it would be a pity to kill such lovely birds when they were preparing to nest. Something deep within him had been touched and stirred by this beauty, this discovery of shy free creatures preparing to increase their kind.

So Carlos continued along the ridge into the primeval forest, where tall, straight trunks soared far upward before they branched,
Mr. Taylor had spoken with enthusiasm of the marvelous diversity of birds that this forest sheltered, but they all seemed to have been warned that a boy was seeking their lives and took care to hide from him. Finally, hungry and tired, he turned homeward, with nothing to show for the few shots that he had fired.

Carlos began to think of the motmots as his birds because they owed their lives to his kindness, and this feeling of owning them made him interested in them. One morning, when he climbed up the ridge to gather firewood, he hid in the midst of great, broad shellflower leaves and waited for the motmots to arrive. After a while, he heard them calling coot coot to one another. Their voices grew stronger, and soon one of the birds alighted on a branch near the pit, where it swung its ornate tail from side to side like a slowly moving pendulum. After its mate arrived, it entered the tunnel, kicking back with both feet alternately and throwing out little jets of loose soil, which followed the digger into the burrow.

On a sunny afternoon a few days later, Carlos, who had climbed up through the hillside pasture to catch the calf, looked into the empty grave to see whether the motmots were still lengthening their burrow. Evidently they were still working at it, for more earth had been removed since his last visit. As he turned away from the pit, a glitter caught his eye. He leaned far over the hole to look more closely. He had not been deceived; something shiny lay amid the loose soil. Cutting a stick, he carefully poked at the bright object until it was wholly exposed. As broad as the palm of his hand, it had the form of a soaring bird. He was now so excited
that he jumped down into the pit without first making sure that no poisonous snake lurked there. Picking up the strange object, he rubbed it against a leg of his patched trousers. As the clay came off, it shine more and more, until it gleamed all over when he held it in the sunshine. It must be pure gold! The moomots had dug it out of a neighboring grave that had not been opened.

"What great luck!" exclaimed Carlos as he slipped the golden image into a pocket to leave both hands free for climbing out of the pit. At the top, he clutched the precious ornament tightly in his right hand and, forgetting about the calf he had come to catch, raced down the steep slope faster than it was safe to go. Before he reached the cabin in the valley, he was shouting "Papá, Mamá, look what I have found!"

After showing his treasure to his parents and discussing what to do with it, Carlos hurried off with his golden bird to Don Tino, whom he found pulling mistletoes from his fruit trees. The man examined it carefully and weighed it in the palm of his hand.

"I cannot tell you just what it is worth," he finally declared, "but we could send it to a man who deals in these things, one whom we can trust to give you a fair price. If you wish to leave it with me, I can attend to it."

"Do you think it will bring enough to pay for Príncipe, Don Tino?" Carlos asked eagerly.

"Yes, it will probably pay for the horse, and a saddle and bridle, with perhaps a little over to buy you new trousers," replied Don Tino with a twinkle in his eyes.
"Then, if I leave the bird with you, may I take Principe?"
"You may take him whenever you like."

Carlos hurried to the pasture and whistled until the bay
neighed and
horse came running up to him. Then, putting a rope bridle on
Principe's head and throwing a coffee sack over his back instead
of a saddle, the boy mounted from a convenient rock and rode
triumphantly home.
Chapter 31

ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP

The life-denying attitude is nourished by ill health, loneliness and neglect, by the contemplation of ugliness, human wickedness and cruelty, nature's harshness, and the suffering of men and other animals. It is difficult for this attitude to persist when one is young and vigorous, in the midst of a devoted family, in beautiful surroundings, amid growing plants and singing birds and merry children, loved by a charming woman of proved constancy. Had Edwin been a young writer or artist struggling to win recognition while living in a garret in one of the more squalid sections of a great city, his dark outlook on the world might have persisted for months or years. In his actual circumstances, it was not likely to last for many weeks. As the troubled days of the revolution and the tragedy of Harold's untimely death receded into the distance, as a more varied diet improved his health, as his chosen work proceeded with fewer forced interruptions, so his spirits rose and with them his appraisal of the world.

Each of the moods into which we fall fortifies itself by appropriate memories. While Edwin was in the depths of melancholy, the recollection of all his little sorrows and disgusts, as of all the horrible and revolting things he had heard or read about, came vividly into his mind. Now that he had become more cheerful, it was easier to relive pleasant experiences, harder to recall hateful things. He was intelligent enough to recognize that such fluctuations in the character of our memories
almost preclude the possibility of deciding whether joy or sorrow predominates in the world.

The visit of the children, who had just left, provided the final touch that was needed to restore Edwin's habitual serenity. What a privilege it would be, he thought, what an enriching experience, to guide the unfolding of such promising young minds, as a gardener nurtures his most valuable plants, teaching them to love and cherish all things beautiful and good, to aspire to everything lofty and noble! He was aware that rearing children has its dark no less than its sunny side: anguished hours in the crises of illness or accidents; frustrating intervals of recalcitrancy or rebelliousness; the constant anxiety to shield impressionable young minds from the corrupting influences that permeate society. These hazards, which have always confronted those who rear children, could be faced, and with wisdom, patience, and average good luck, triumphantly overcome.

More troubling was the thought of the hideous things that might befall his children, perhaps many years hence, in a world where violence and terror grew ever more rampant. This uncertainty about their future perpetuated his doubt whether it would be fair to give life to them.

A few days after the departure of his young cousins, Edwin made an excursion into the mountains, to search for certain plants that grew only at greater altitudes. Eugene was now strong enough to accompany him; but Edwin was not sorry that the observations in which his friend was engaged demanded his daily presence, as he wished to be alone with his thoughts. On the preced-
ing evening, his mother had prepared a breakfast and lunch to carry in his knapsack, so that he could set forth on foot before the stars faded from the brightening sky. For about two miles he followed the road up the valley, then turned to his right on a trail that crossed a long, forested ridge into a neighboring valley. Softened by two months of rain, the shady trail had been churned into mud by horses' hoofs and human feet. As Edwin laboriously picked his way, taking care to avoid the deeper puddles, his progress was cheered by a low, calm, exquisitely graduated whistle, ascending in three steps, that ever and again came from the surrounding undergrowth. By repeating the whistle, Edwin enticed the retiring singer close enough to be seen. He was a plain brown bird, with large dark eyes that peered out inquiringly from the foliage beside the trail, looking for the rival who had dared to challenge him in his own territory. Edwin surmised that the singer might be a thrush; it never occurred to him that such a large, deliberate, dull-colored bird was related to the diminutive, brick, brightly attired manakins. Later, Gene told him that it was a thrushlike manakin.

The solitary traveller was glad when the muddy trail reached the crest of the ridge and dropped down on the farther side, where he did not intend to follow it. Near the trail's highest point, he found an obscure path leading upward along the ridge. Soon
the ill-defined track ended, and he drew his machete from the sheath that hung at his side to sever vines and branches that barred his advance. After a while, the ridge inclined more sharply upward. The higher he climbed, the more abundant the tall, slender feather palms became, until they dominated the forest, and their great fallen fronds were the chief impediment to his progress. Again and again he severed one with a stroke of his long knife to open a way for himself. He climbed steadily until he reached a flat knob, beyond which the ridge dipped into a saddle. Then it swept upward for miles to a high summit of the Cordillera de Talamanca and the continental divide, too distant to be reached before evening.

The knob where Edwin found himself enchanted him with its beauty and unexpectedness. He was standing ankle-deep in sphagnum moss, from which, when squeezed, water dripped as from a freshly immersed sponge. When he looked downward, it was not difficult to imagine himself in a northern peat bog, amid cotton grass, pitcher plants, sundew, Labrador tea, cranberry and cascandra. When he turned his eyes upward, he saw that he was standing beneath a canopy of featherlike palm fronds, whose long, ribbon-like segments made a fretwork that almost hid the blue
sky. The smooth gray trunks of the palms formed a forest of columns around him. Palm trees growing out of a bog on a tropical summit, nearly a mile high! Yet here was no rock-rimmed basin to hold the bog water, such as he had once found on a mountain-top in the northern woods; the ground sloped outward on all sides, and only the abundant rainfall kept the moss saturated.

On this summit the palms were the tallest and most abundant trees. Among them were many medium-sized trees which Edwin recognized as a kind of clusia, rooted in the moss-covered ground instead of growing as epiphytes on other trees, as clusias usually do. Their large, rounded leaves were dark green and very thick. Amid this glossy foliage gleamed wide white blossoms that shed a delightful fragrance over all the mountain-top. All around Edwin grew low, palm-like plants whose great, clustered, deeply cleft leaves rose higher than his head. Sprawling among them were curious ferns with slender, rod-like stems three yards long and narrow leaves like those of the dandelion. To his delight, in this mountain-top forest of stately palms and fragrant clusias he found no trace of man's destroying hand.

The sun was already high, and Edwin looked for a place to eat his lunch. On the eastern side of the nearly level summit was a precipice, which broke the continuity of the forest and offered an outlook. Near the edge of the cliff he found a fallen trunk on which he sat to rest, eat, and drink in the wide
prospect that spread before him. To his left, far above him, rose the massive summit of Chirripó, with clouds already gathering around its craggy pinnacles. Halfway up the flanks of this sprawling mountain, a long, white ribbon of water shot out from among the trees and fell into the head of the deep V-shaped valley over which Edwin looked. Here and there along the valley's length, a short segment of the mountain torrent gleamed through the verdure that lined its banks. Only at the lower end of the valley had the settlers' clearings begun to encroach upon the forest. A compact flock of noisy green parakeets coursed swiftly over the mountainside. A small white bird flew with low, grunting notes into the crown of a great tree at the foot of the precipice. The delicate fragrance of the clusia flowers reached Edwin from the palm forest behind him.

As Edwin rested on the mountain-top, taking deep breaths of the invigorating perfumed air, a feeling of exaltation surged over him, lifting his thoughts to heights they rarely attained. His presence here took on a mystic significance. He had brought to this solitary eminence something which it had lacked: the appreciation of its wonder and beauty. His lifelong care to harm no living thing had attuned him to the life around him with a closeness that few people achieve; and he felt intuitively, even if he could not prove, that Wordsworth's faith "that every flower enjoys the air it breathes" was more than a poetical conceit. But even if vegetable cells and organs vibrate with sentient life, he was sure that no tree appreciates the
majesty and beauty of its own form, or that of its neighbors, because it lacks the eyes and mind indispensable for perceiving a tree as a whole. And how could a flower appreciate a flower's fragrance, without an olfactory organ? Edwin's keen response to the beauty around him had brought fresh significance to the existence of the trees and flowers on this mountain-top, as it had to his own.

Edwin was aware that some people would contend that the enjoyment was all his, in his own mind, while the objects, living or lifeless, which contributed to this enjoyment gained nothing thereby. But he saw clearly that this was to view the situation too narrowly, and to attribute to distinguishable objects a degree of insulation which they by no means possess. He and the things around him were linked together by subtle bonds. As long as he remained on the mountain-top with mind and senses alert, he and the palm trees and the elucias and the moss at his feet formed a single closely-knit community, a coherent society, whose fine achievement was his appreciative response to the beauty around him, his joy in being here. No! he had circumscribed the community too narrowly. Certainly it must include the sun, without which the trees would be unable to grow and he to see them, and the air which they and he breathed, and the life-giving showers, and even the solid earth beneath his feet, which bore up the mountain summit and the trees upon it. All these things, great and small, were bound into unity and given higher significance by his grateful
appreciation of them; none could be omitted without diminishing or destroying the value of his present situation. If his own responsive mind was indispensable for the realization of the surrounding beauty, so were the trees, the sunshine, and the air.

From the summit behind him, Edwin's thought soared over the earth spread before him, far beyond the distant purple hills that bounded his view. The wide sweep of his inward vision embraced continents and islands, cities and farms, people working in factories or studying in libraries or investigating in laboratories, people hurrying to and fro in automobiles and trains and ships and airplanes. What his presence signified for the mountaintop, so, he concluded, man's presence signifies to the planet as a whole - at least potentially. Of all the living things on earth, man alone has made a concerted attempt to know his planet and all it contains, to ascertain its position in the solar system and this system's place among the galaxies, to sound the farthest depths of space. If man is not the only animal capable of responding to the wonder and beauty of the universe, at least he seems, when at his best, to do so far more adequately than any other terrestrial creature.

This capacity to understand and appreciate the whole of which he is a part is man's greatest contribution to the whole. In this, and not otherwise, he enhances the planet by his presence. Only by virtue of this capacity can it be held that in producing human evolution has attained a higher level. Those who maintain that man's superiority consists in the more efficient exploitation of his environment have missed the point. Long before man arose, earth
bore as much life as it could support. Unless a more recent form of life attains a level higher than that of forms which it supplants, there is no evolutionary advance but only evolutionary change. Man's superiority consists in his more adequate knowledge and appreciation of the whole to which he belongs or it is illusory.

Illusory, too, is the notion that we survey the natural world from outside. Only as integral parts of the whole can we exist. We cannot live in isolation from the rest of the universe than an organ, a limb or an eye, can live and function when excised from the body. When any of us knows or appreciates the world or some part thereof, he or she is in effect the universe knowing and enjoying itself, by means of an organ that through aeonian striving it has evolved for this purpose. Only when we see ourselves in this light, as organs wherewith the universe is realizing its own potentialities, can we do full justice to our privileged position on this planet and preserve a decent humility in the face of the stupendous whole.

All this, and much more, was implicit in the vision that filled Edwin's mind as he sat on the mountaintop gazing over the valley, but to work out the details of his philosophy, and to be able to present it even as sketchily as has been done here, would require years of study and reflection. Yet he already had a clear perception of man's place in nature, and he regarded that place of major importance. To fill such a role in a world so beautiful as that which spread before him, and to help others to understand their own proper function, was a privilege so high and glorious that to deny it to anyone would be unpardonable.
Even at the risk of much suffering, as from disease or the violence of nature or, more probably, from the wickedness of men in their present ignorance of their true function and unreadiness to exercise it, he would have eagerly accepted such a role if the choice had been offered to him, and he could only assume that the same would be true of any children whom he might rear.

Edwin was now convinced that he had been wrong in hesitating to marry Elvira. Suddenly, he was overcome by the fear that, held at a distance by himself, she would be persuaded by one of the suitors who would not fail to approach her while she was in the
city. A moment later, he banished the suspicion as unjust to her; she was not the woman to transfer her affection so quickly. But he must lose no time in communicating his latest decision to her. She would understand his reason for changing his mind, and not accuse him of fickleness.

It was now past midday, and the clouds were closing over the last patches of blue sky. Already the higher summits in the north were enveloped in them, and Edwin saw that to avoid a drenching he must hurry homeward. He collected a few twigs of the clusia and some other rare plants that grew on the summit, then started down the ridge by which he had come. Through the open palm forest on the back of the ridge he made excellent time, and was soon hundreds of feet below the knob. But where was the narrow bridge over which he had passed in the morning? He had taken its altitude, and now he removed his altimeter from his pocket to check his present position. The aneroid barometer indicated that he was already three hundred feet below the bridge—more than could be accounted for by any change in atmospheric pressure since the morning. The ridge up which he had climbed had offered such a definite route that he had not deemed it necessary to mark a trail in order to retrace his steps. Now he regretted this omission. It is not easy to lose one's way while climbing a mountain; for, as a rule, all its slopes and spurs lead up to the summit, as major highways converge on a town. But on the downward course the ridges diverge, often so imperceptibly that, in forested country, one can take the wrong fork without being aware of what he has done. Edwin
now realized that he had veered too far to the left, and was no longer on the ridge by which he had ascended.

The sensible course would have been to turn around and climb upward until he reached the point where the ridge on which he now found himself converged with that which he wished to follow. But the first drops of the approaching deluge were already falling; he was anxious to get out of the forest before the storm broke, and thought that he could save time by crossing the hollow between the two ridges. Until he reached the wide, muddy trail, the raincoat which he carried would too greatly impede his movements; so he placed his watch, barometer and notebook in his knapsack, where they would stay driest, and prepared to take a drenching himself. Then he dropped down on the right side of the ridge, soon passing from the fairly open stand of palms on its crest into mixed forest with tangled undergrowth. Here, beneath a dense ceiling of clouds and a heavy canopy of foliage, the light was very dim; and as he floundered among creepers, brush and fallen logs, he had difficulty keeping his course. The storm broke, and the big drops pelted down on the thick leaves of the trees with a loud roar. The depression between the two ridges was not simple but broken by minor irregularities of the surface, and soon Edwin was uncertain of his direction. He decided to push downward to whatever river valley he could reach.

The storm became more violent. Vivid flashes of lightning pierced the twilight at the bottom of the forest, and long peals
of thunder reverberated over the mountains. The wind roared through the treetops, which bowed to their superior force; it broke off dead limbs and snapping living boughs, which crashed down all around Edwin. Not far from him, a great uprooted tree ploughed downward through its neighbors, snapping the lianas which held it and shattering the smaller trees that opposed its fall, with cannon-like reports that sounded above the roar of the wind, the pelting of raindrops, and even the rumbling of thunder. The solitary wanderer was aware that he was in great danger. He was uncertain whether it would be safer to push onward or to take shelter at the foot of some great tree. But, not knowing which tree would yield to the wind's fury or draw the lightning's stroke, he decided to continue downward, severing obstructing vines with the machete that seemed always on the point of slipping from his wet hand.

A short while ago, on the beautiful summit bathed in sunshine, Edwin had felt that his presence was of some importance, contributing to the greater perfection of the living community of which he was temporarily a member. Now, in the tangled dishevelled undergrowth at the bottom of the roaring forest, amid spines that pricked him and vines that tripped him and dark shadows where a venomous snake might be lurking, exposed to falling branches and flying splinters of lightning-riven trunks, he seemed of no more consequence than the brown sodden leaves that covered the ground beneath him. What did the wind or the lightning care about the trees, or the cowering birds and monkeys who sought shelter in them, or the man who wandered
beneath them? What did the trees care about the animals that took refuge amid their foliage or the man who stumbled over their roots? What did the birds and quadrupeds care about the featherless biped, except to avoid him? What did any component of the world care about any more highly evolved component, what did its greater perfection mean to it? The elements never swerve from their courses to spare any living thing. Neither animals nor plants voluntarily modify their hereditary modes of behavior to serve man. Feeling themselves thus flagrantly disregarded and neglected, men cry out that they stand alone in a hostile universe.

Even alone amid the menacing storm, Edwin, now that he had recovered from his spell of depression, would not admit that the universe was hostile to him. Whether deliberately or not, the elements supported his life, even now as he hacked at an obstructing vine that receded from his blow like a cable of tough rubber, then snapped back into its original position. The plants provided the energy with which he wielded his machete, unhappily turning it against them. The notion that a creature so frail as man, needing so many things for his comfort and even his bare existence, could survive in a hostile universe was preposterous. As to the less evolved components of the world appreciating those more highly evolved, altering their courses to serve them, what could one expect? We do not look for children to understand and be considerate of adults, except to the extent that adults teach them to be. How could the little child appreciate the accomplishments, or understand
the needs of parents so much older and wiser than itself? Nevertheless, we expect adults to understand and be patient with children. Edwin recalled that his father had more than once said that man’s lack of consideration for humbler creatures is a far more tragic and shocking aspect of the world than their failure to change their behavior for his convenience.

Soon the storm spent its fury. The wind died away; the rain dwindled to a steady shower; the sky became less black. Edwin pushed stubbornly down the steep mountainside, through the resisting undergrowth. After a while, he came to an old opening in the forest, choked with bracken fern higher than his head and so dense that, for all his vigorous slashing, his progress through it was discouragingly slow. When he tried to force his way through the fern without cutting a path, it held him back like a strong net. After he had struggled through the bracken, he came to a small stream, which he followed downward, still cutting his way, until he reached an old, abandoned banana plantation. Here, to his immense relief, he found a recently cut trail, which led him past the ruins of a thatched cabin and a sugar-cane press. A short distance beyond, he came to the muddy trail which he had followed in the morning, but far down on the side of the Río de Las Cataratas, the next considerable stream to the east of the Aguas Claras. Now welcome was the sight of even that wretched thoroughfare, which, after what he had been through, seemed a magnificent boulevard! The afternoon was now far advanced, and he was eager to reach home before nightfall. Disregarding mudpuddles, he marched rapidly onward,
crossing the ridge between the two watersheds, then descending the valley of the Aguas Claras to Selva Alegre. In the dusk he reached home, wet, muddy and dead tired, but well satisfied with the day's excursion.

A letter from Elvira was awaiting him. She would return on the following Wednesday, five days off.
Chapter 32
LIFE'S AFFIRMATION

Don Mariano Trevana gladly accepted Edwin's offer to bring Elvira back from the village. He went on Callip, leading her mare, and was waiting at the airstrip when the airplane from San José landed. Before the propellers stopped spinning, she waved to him from a window, making his heart beat faster. As she came down the steps, he held out his hand to her and relieved her of the small parcels that she was carrying. She was looking well, and so beautiful that he could hardly keep his eyes from her. It was necessary to repack her baggage so that it could be carried on the horses, and their heads touched as they leaned over the saddlebags together. He was grateful that, unlike some women he knew, she could travel without such a clutter of things that a packhorse was needed to carry them.

"You are looking ever so much better, Edwin," she said when they were riding along the road together. "The hollowness has quite left your cheeks."

"I feel much better, too. Everything has been going well on the farm since the revolution ended. The visit of our little cousins, Margaret and Arthur, was a great treat to all of us, as I wrote to you in a letter. The only thing that was lacking this last month was you."

"I supposed that you would be too absorbed in your studies to think about me. But I thought of you all the time."

"In the midst of all the diversions you had in the big city!"
"There weren't so many diversions," Elvira protested. "Of course, there was much visiting back and forth with our relations with Violet and friends. I went to see your grandmother, and we told her all about what happened to us during the revolution, in more detail than can easily be told in a letter. She is a dear old lady, and has such a lovely collection of orchids. Then I heard two recitals at the National Theatre and saw a few movies, although only one was worth seeing. But most of the time I stayed at home and helped Mother, who was not feeling too well, although nothing serious seems to be wrong with her. She has her hands full with those girls. How big and sophisticated Elena and Teresa are becoming! I think neither of them will turn out to be a country girl like me; they are too enamored of the gay life of the city."

He encouraged her to talk as they rode along between fields of tall corn already in tassel and green pastures where horses and cattle peacefully grazed. He had something important to tell her, but he was not ready yet. Finally, when they came to the solitary stretch of road where, a little more than a month ago, he had announced his decision not to marry, he guided his horse close to hers and asked:

"Elvira, do you think a man should change his mind on the most important question he has to decide for himself?"

"Why shouldn't he, if he has a good reason?"

"I am relieved to hear you say that, because I think that we should marry after all. Last week I climbed alone to the top of a mountain, and while I rested there, looking over the
valley and up to the crags of Chirripó, I saw everything in a new light. I must tell you more about that later, when we can sit quietly together. Now I no longer believe that it is wrong to have children, because of what they might suffer. Life can be such a glorious adventure, and man has such an important role to fill on this planet, that it would be wrong to deny it to any child who can be given a proper start. At least, if anyone were to ask me whether, if I had the choice, I would wish to be born again, I should say 'Certainly'; and it seems right to make the same choice for those still unable to choose for themselves."

"I am glad that you think so, because that is the way I feel, too."

"Then that is settled. I hope that you will forgive me, if I made you suffer by telling you that we ought not to marry."

"I was sad, but I did not suffer as I did when you went off with Harold to rescue Gene Rivers, or next day when you and Don Guillermo and old Don Chico went to stop the pillagers. Then I felt as wives and sweethearts must feel when their men go to war; only they, poor creatures! are often kept in the agony of suspense far, far longer. But when you said that we ought not to marry, I realized that it was because you were trying hard to do the right thing by everybody, not only those who had been born but those still unborn, and I respected you even more for it. I was happier having a man like you as a devoted friend, than if I had as a husband some egoistic creature who thought only of himself."
"I wonder what your mother and your friends in San José will think when they hear that we have changed our minds again?" asked Edwin.

"They will think nothing of it, because I never told them that the engagement was broken; and Father agreed to keep it quiet, too. When they inquired when we would marry, I simply told them that the date had not yet been set."

"That was well done. Don't you think that we should set it now?"

"The sooner the better." She rode in thoughtful silence for a minute, then continued: "Since we are to be married by the governor of this province, we must go to San José. I suppose that about the middle of next month is as soon as we could make all the arrangements without getting into a rush. I hate to be rushed, for then things are done wrong."

"I hate to be rushed, too. Let's make it about the middle of July, then."

She looked at him hard. "You are so handsome, Edwin," she said. "Couldn't we seal our renewed engagement with one little kiss?"

"What has happened to your eyesight, Elvira? You should have gone to the oculist while you were in the city," he said with a smile.

He looked carefully up and down the road, and saw that they had it all to themselves. Then he pulled Callip as close to her mare as he could, and gave her what she desired.

"I wonder whether Callip and Rosilla are glad that they will..."
soon be in the same family?" she asked.

On hearing his name, Gallip turned back his right ear.

"Probably they will be, when they find themselves in the same pasture," Edwin replied.

"Don't you think that it would be best to live at Santa Teresa until we go to the States?" asked Elvira. "There is more room than at Selva Alegre. When we first decided to marry, Father said that we could have the big bedroom on the second floor. He also said that if we wished to come home right after the wedding, he would stay in San José and give us the whole house to ourselves for a week. Pacifica could cook for us."

"That will be the best way. But I think we should have a little honeymoon, too, after we go to the States. What would you like to see, in the East? Maybe later, when we have more money, we could visit the West."

"I should love to see Washington."

"There is much to see there, and we could spend a few days sightseeing, before we begin work at the university. And I am sure that Aunt Florence will wish to meet you, and doubtless she will invite us to stay a while with her and Uncle Norman."

While these plans, and many more, were being made, the horses bore the lovers steadily homeward. Almost before they were aware of it, they found themselves at the entrance to Santa Teresa. Edwin asked to be excused from going in. To have to tell his future father-in-law that he had again changed his mind would have been slightly embarrassing. It would be easier for Elvira, who had not changed hers, to inform her father of the latest developments.
Edwin rode up the valley humming a tune, to the accompaniment of the mountain torrent that babbled down its rocky bed close by. From time to time he patted Gallip's smooth neck, in which the first white hairs were beginning to variegate the bay. He loved Gallip; he loved the laughing river; he loved the trees that shaded it and the birds that flitted through them; he loved the world; but most of all he loved Elvira. All his love for everything else seemed to come to a focus in her, then to be reflected back from this central point to everything else. Because she had understood him, and been patient with him, and valued him for his conscientious scruples, he could now, after having settled certain perplexities to his own satisfaction, marry her and, he hoped, rear children with her, without misgivings. Henceforth his life would be whole, and hers would be whole, and together each would be a more perfect whole than either could be alone.

Often, when on the verge of achieving our most cherished desire, we frail dependent creatures, living without assurance that we shall live another hour or that our limbs will obey our mind's next command, are beset with a lurking fear that some accident will prevent the realization of our hope. This canker that gnaws at the heart of so much of human felicity did not trouble Edwin now. He was assailed by no doubts that he and Elvira would be happily united in a month's time. In a way, the present state of his mind resembled that which had been his as a child; yet there was an important difference, and he had made
a long spiritual journey since those days which seemed so far off to him yet to his parents were so recent --for to memory, time is not measured by the revolutions of the earth so much as by the changes we ourselves have undergone.

In Edwin's spiritual journey, four stages might be recognized. The earliest of which he had any clear recollection was characterized by trust. As a little child, he had trusted in the stability of his home, in the goodness and wisdom of his parents and their power to shield him from all mishaps so long as he obeyed them, as he nearly always did, not only because he felt safer that way but because he loved them. This trust had no rational foundation; it seems to be the attitude which nature has implanted in all tender young animals, because it is indispensable for their survival.

As Edwin grew to manhood, he never had reason to doubt the goodness and sincerity of his parents; he was incessantly grateful that he had been spared this cruel disillusion that some of his contemporaries had suffered. But from the god and goddess that they had appeared to his childish vision, they had inevitably shrunk to the dimensions of ordinary mortals of the better sort, not infallibly wise but liable, like everyone else, to make an occasional error of judgment. And their power, which had once seemed sufficient to shield him from every adverse influence, he now realized to be quite inadequate to withstand social and economic forces which might overwhelm the most securely established home and dissipate the greatest fortune. But he had not been distressed by this waning of his trust in the power of his
parents and the unshakable stability of his home, for it was compensated by the simultaneous growth of confidence in himself, in his ability to meet the stresses of life, to rise above adverse circumstances, to make his wishes come true, and even -- in his moments of greatest exaltation -- to make the world better than he had found it. Indeed, the conviction that the world is not all that it should or can be, and that he can improve it, seems necessary to maintain the spiritual tension of any generous youth, and to spur him to develop his powers to the full.

When he returned to Salva Alegre in the preceding autumn, Edwin was still in this second stage of his spiritual pilgrimage, characterized by confidence in himself and his lucky star. This self-confidence of youth is just as precariously established, just as lacking in a rational foundation, as childhood's trust which it superseded. Although it may long persist in a robust, insensitive nature which has the good fortune to escape major reverses; in a thoughtful, sensitive mind it is a condition of such unstable equilibrium that it is almost certain soon to encounter something which sends it crashing down, bringing on the third stage, characterized by disillusion, or, in its stronger manifestation, persistent despair -- the state of mind which Carlyle, in Sartor Resartus, called "The Everlasting No."

Edwin was precipitated into this abyss of negation, this chasm of despair, by the events of the recent revolution, which, although one of the smaller and more transitory of the social upheavals of his time, brought home to him, as greater but more distant outbursts of terror and destruction scarcely could, the magnitude of the forces of evil which this world contains, the
immensity of the woes which they bring when unleashed, and our pitiful inadequacy to withstand them. At the depth of his despondency, Edwin viewed the life of each sentient being, whether a man or some humbler creature, as a journey through a barren, stony land, where every stunted plant bristles with cruel thorns, where behind each rocky outcrop and in every cleft in the parched hills lurk hideous monsters of the most varied forms, waiting to pounce upon the naked traveller and tear his quivering flesh with fang and claw and talon. If, through accident rather than his ability to protect himself, the pilgrim succeeds in passing unscathed through the length of this fearful wilderness, he falls inexorably into the bottomless chasm which we call death. To send a beloved child on such a journey, knowing full well that we can give him our pitifully inadequate support only part of the way, seemed to Edwin heartless and wicked.

Because he was surrounded by loved and loving companions and by natural beauty which uplifted his spirit, Edwin's descent into the vale of despair was neither so deep nor so prolonged as, for a mind as sensitive as his, it might have been in less propitious circumstances. As he recovered from despondency, he entered the fourth stage of his spiritual pilgrimage, which is characterized by faith. At first he believed that his renewed faith in life was the consequence of the vision he had on the mountain-top; but more mature reflection convinced him that the vision was the expression, rather than the cause, of his growing faith. There is a faith deeper, more primitive and funda-
mental, than that which religion instills or demands—the faith implicit in all living, without which life would cease. In a world where life exists always precariously, with no assurance of its continuance beyond the present moment, faith, or something very like it, is indispensable. Without this implicit faith, this capacity to stake everything on a venture whose success is far from certain, no seed would germinate, no sprout would grow, no bird would build its nest or patiently warm its eggs, no animal would undertake a long and hazardous migration. All that life demands is the probability—no, the mere possibility—of success; and to strive with all one's strength and resources toward an end whose attainment is far from assured, is the essence of faith.

Not only is faith, or its organic equivalent, indispensable for the basic vital processes such as growth and reproduction, it is equally necessary for the more advanced expressions of life, for philosophy itself. Every philosopher who has advanced a few steps beyond pyrrhonic scepticism or chilling solipsism will, if candid, acknowledge his debt to faith. Without faith that his senses are not deceiving him when they report a surrounding world to his mind, he must believe that his life is a fabric of dreams; without faith in the adequacy of his intelligence to grapple with the enigmas of this perplexing universe, he could never tackle the vast problems which confront him. And so Edwin's vision, and the philosophy of life which began to emerge from it, were expressions of the vital faith which welled up from the depths of his being. This faith was different
from the trust of his childhood and the confidence of his youth. Their strength had never been tested; it had overcome the soul-devastating vision of the void of despair, thereby proving its power. With the emergence of this faith that was at once new and old, he passed from youth to maturity.

As faith is necessary for the perpetuation of life, so is love to give it sweetness and beauty. Edwin's love was stronger than his faith and had endured through his hours of deepest despondency, making him compassionate of the sufferings of others. This love now centered on Elvira; but she did not, as she knew, absorb all of it, and she would not have had it otherwise. She, too, loved many things more intensely because she loved him. An affection such as bound them together does not drain love from the surrounding world to concentrate it on the preferred person; it generates vast quantities of love which flow from the preferred person over the surrounding world. With love, faith, mutual understanding and respect, shared ideals, health and strength, Edwin and Elvira had as fair prospect of a happy life together as a young couple ever had.

Everybody at Selva Alegre was glad to hear that Edwin and Elvira would soon be wedded. Violet was happy because the marriage would bind her more closely to her dearest friend. Eugene was pleased that Edwin had recovered his usual good spirits, and thought that he was making an excellent match. But most of all, Edwin's parents were relieved and gratified by his latest decision. In doubting whether it would be right for Elvira and himself to bring children into the world, he had made them fear that they had done wrong in giving life to him. All the loving care
that for years they had lavished upon him had been misspent, if in the end he found life so unsatisfactory that he hesitated to perpetuate it. In reaffirming his faith in life, he had vindicated their faith in giving life to him. They thought that if the people who pass on the torch of life with deliberation, because they believe the flame worth perpetuating, could keep it burning long enough, and if some way could be found to prevent the irresponsible ones from flooding the world with offspring who are unwanted and too often unloved, a time would eventually come when foreseeing parents could launch cherished children on their earthly voyage with fewer doubts and misgivings.
Chapter 33
VIOLET AND EUGENE

In early May, Eugene was well enough to wander about the farm, searching for nesting birds that he could study. At first his excursions were short, but each succeeding day he felt stronger and could go farther. At this season it was not difficult to find nests; and in addition to those he discovered for himself, Lalo and others on the farm led him to see the nests which they had encountered. He was delighted by the unexpected diversity of the structures which now came to his attention. In addition to open bowls or cups, such as are built by most small birds everywhere, these tropical birds constructed a great variety of closed receptacles for their eggs and young. Some of the smallest and dullest of the birds built the largest and most elaborate nests, as though they tried to compensate for their paltry aspect by the magnitude of their accomplishments.

It would be hard to find in all the world a plainer, more self-effacing bird than the little olive-green flycatcher, known as the piprompha; yet she built a marvellous nest, a pear-shaped structure of bright green moss, which she attached to the dangling root of an epiphyte or some other slender hanging support, beside a verdant ferny cliff or the mossy trunk of a great tree. In the side of this mass of living moss she left a little round doorway, that gave access to the snuggest of chambers, softly padded on all sides with shredded fibers, where her two or three white eggs lay. Easier to find were the nests
of another unobtrusive little bird, the yellow-olive flycatcher, which hung conspicuously from slender, drooping twigs in shady pastures and along roadsides. Composed of dark-colored fibers densely matted, they resembled a chemist's retort suspended with the spout pointing downward. To enter her nest, the flycatcher flew straight upward, passing through the spout into a rounded chamber, where her two or three speckled eggs reposcd.

Eugene helped the Fernleys identify the birds around them, including many that for years they had been feeding on a board in a tree. In the absence of a guide, they called their birds by general names, such as woodpecker or oriole, or by a designation that they invented to distinguish them. Fascinated by the discoveries that he reported to the family, Violet asked whether she might help him, an offer that he eagerly accepted. By alternating with him at a bird's nest, they could make prolonged, continuous watches and learn details that shorter vigilé might have missed. She was a keen observer. Moreover, her sympathetic imagination was a great asset, for in ornithology, as in other sciences, an educated surmise often leads to an important discovery.

Eugene could imagine no greater felicity than to spend many years exploring with her the habits of tropical American birds, so amazingly diverse, and on the whole so little known. But ever since the afternoon when they had spoken together beneath the rose-apple tree, and she had revealed that she was sorry for him, he had been reticent about disclosing his deep attachment to her.
Their collaboration had been such as might have been carried on by two people of the same sex drawn together by a shared interest. Eugene had resolved that, unless she gave some intimation that her sentiments toward himself had changed, he would make no advances to her. Still smarting from the wound he had inflicted upon his own spirit by violating his principles and the resulting tragedy, he was determined to spare himself the pain of a rebuff by her, however mild it might be.

Violet's work with Eugene was opening up a new world to her. For years she had watched golden-naped woodpeckers come to eat the bananas that she placed on the birds' board; she had admired their colorful attire and been amused by the nervous bows and churr she sometimes made while they hesitat-
ly approached the board; but until she helped Eugene to study them, the details of their lives had remained a closed book to her. Now that she knew how they reared their young, and led the fledglings back to sleep with them in the nest cavity, as few woodpeckers do, and how the juveniles helped their parents, she felt much more intimate with them.

She seemed to have taken possession of them, to have made them her own as truly as though she held them in her hand or a cage; and her feeling of ownership was strengthened by every additional fact that she knew about them. Yet all the while, the birds were leading their own free lives, without human interference.

Violet was grateful to the man who had helped her to see what had been hidden from her. She admired his competence as a naturalist no less than his personal qualities: his good looks, his great reserve of strength, his cheerful optimism, his friendliness, his gratitude for all that was done for him.

She liked him, and she believed that she could love him unreservedly, if only she could forget what he had done while staying with Don Chico and Doña Amanda. The memory of what she had seen that afternoon continued to haunt her; it impaired his character as an ugly wart on his face would have spoiled his appearance.

One day, when she was alone with her father, she asked:

"Do you think that Eugene is a good man?"

"A very fine man, as is to be expected of Edwin's friend. What makes you doubt it?"

"Because he killed birds."

"That distressed us all," said Mr. Fernley, "but in fairness to him, we must view his actions in the proper perspective. From what I have observed, few people anywhere adopt moral
standards higher than those which pass current in their
culture. Usually they accept these standards from external
pressure or social compulsion rather than to be true to them-
selves or an ideal; and they are held to be exceptionally good
people if they do not from time to time fall below them. When
hardly more than a boy, Eugene adopted, freely and without com-
pulsion, an ideal higher and more comprehensive than his society
recognizes---one that is rarely professed in Western civiliza-
tion. Later, under the insistence of the man he had chosen,
because of his high scientific reputation, to direct his studies,
Eugene reduced his ideal, at least at one point, to the level
of those around him. He did not fall below the currently accept-
ed standard, as many people do and are pardoned; he fell from
a higher level to the conventional one, which many people would
consider no fault at all, but rather a return to sanity---to
what George Santayana so well called 'normal madness.' He began
to shoot birds reluctantly, as a duty to his scientific career;
but with each successive victim, he found the act of killing
easier and less repugnant to him, much as happens to soldiers
in war. One must bear all this in mind when assessing his
character."

"Do you believe that he could ever bring himself to kill
harmless creatures again?" Violet asked.

"I should be very much surprised if he did. What he has
been through has strengthened his moral fiber and increased
his sympathy with all creatures, as he himself recognizes."

The more that Violet reflected on her father's words, the
more she felt that she had not been quite fair to Eugene. She had failed to make allowance for the great difference between the circumstances of his early life and of her own and her brothers'. As long as she could remember, the Fernleys had always been so different from all their neighbors, that to differ from those who surround you had seemed to the growing children the natural condition of mankind. Now she realized that most people deem it important to resemble their neighbors as closely as possible, in customs and beliefs no less than in material circumstances. Although the Fernleys contrasted in so many ways with their neighbors, they were a closely united family and (except for Harold's rebelliousness) they gave each other strong moral support. When Eugene, on his summer vacation four years earlier, had adopted their attitude toward the living world, he had, in a measure, estranged himself from his own family. After he left Selva Alegre, his only ally was Edwin. When Edwin returned to Costa Rica, he was, in a sense, more alone in his parents' house than Edwin while he was thousands of miles from home. For Edwin could always count on his distant family to support his ideals, as Eugene could not count on his near family. Obviously, he was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, else he would have persevered in his chosen course despite isolation or even active persecution. Nevertheless, his conscience was more exacting than that of most men.

Violet would have preferred that the man to whom she gave her heart had led a life in every way beyond reproach. Unlike
certain moralists, she did not believe that experience of wrong-doing is desirable, because one who has fallen and risen again may be wiser, and perhaps also stronger, than one who has never fallen at all. Her father believed firmly in the Socratic doctrine that virtue can be taught, that one does not require personal experience of wrong conduct and its painful consequences in order to recognize and avoid it. On this principle he had raised his children, and, on the whole, he had reason to be satisfied with the results. But Violet was now beginning to realize that few people are intuitively aware of evil, so that they may recognize it at a distance and avoid its painful consequences to self and others. Unless we have been properly instructed at the appropriate age, we must taste its bitterness in order to know what it is; as the child who has not been taught to avoid fire must burn his fingers before he suspects its power. In one department of conduct which Violet held to be of supreme importance, Eugene had not measured up to her standards, probably because he had lacked such early and careful guidance as she and her brothers had. This, as she now saw, was his misfortune, not his fault.

Violet had long ago told Eugene that she was sorry for him, because he had harmed himself by harming other beings. Now she had another, and perhaps stronger, motive for feeling sorry for him: because she had judged him unfairly. Yet this was not a wrong for which she could easily ask his forgiveness, as though she had accused him unjustly or been rude to him. She had never been otherwise than courteous and kind to him; a certain aloof-
ness, spiritual rather than overt, had been the chief consequence of her too severe judgment of him. To explain this to him would be difficult and embarrassing, at least at the present stage of their relationship. She must use more subtle means to make him understand that her sentiments toward him were changing.

Before long, an opportunity arose. From Edwin she learned that Eugene's birthday--his twenty-fourth--was approaching. She sent to the city for some handkerchiefs, on which she embroidered his initials with her exquisitely fine needlework. On the appropriate day, he found them at his breakfast place and was deeply touched.

It was now the end of August. The corn had all been harvested and stored in the granary in its tightly closed husks, to keep out the weevils. The coffee berries were beginning to turn red. All but the latest of the birds had finished nesting and were now molting and almost songless. The migrants were returning from the North. Edwin and Elvira, who had been living happily at Santa Teresa, had set the date for their migration in the reverse direction. Eugene felt that the time was approaching for him to go, too. One day he said to Violet:

"I must leave you soon. Would it be too much to ask you to keep watch over the woodpecker family that we have been studying, to learn how long the six of them continue to sleep together?"

"I shall be glad to do so, as I, too, am interested in learning how long the family holds together. But it would be better if you could stay and follow their activities yourself."

"I should like very much to stay, for a number of reasons. Although, with your help, I have made interesting observations
on a variety of birds, I began so late that I have no study sufficiently complete enough for my dissertation. But to get the stages that I missed, I should need to be here next March and April. That would mean staying a long while, and perhaps you and your parents would grow tired of me. If I remained so long, I should certainly expect to pay for my board and keep."

"Perhaps if you helped Father," Violet suggested, "especially during the coming months when few birds will be nesting, you could earn your board and keep. He misses all the help that Harold gave him, by going to Ureña and looking after things on the farm. Father is reaching the age when he would rather sit quietly with his books than run about the countryside. The old wound in his leg, that he received in the First World War, hurts him if he walks or rides far. Until Edwin returns, he will have no son to assist him."

"Harold's place would be hard to fill, but I should do my best. He and Edwin are the best friends I ever had; I learned more from Edwin, but I owe my life to Harold. How tragic that one can often do nothing to show his gratitude to those whom he owes most!"

"If you cannot show your gratitude to Harold, you might show it to Harold's parents, by helping them like a son."

"That is another reason for staying. And if I remain for another year, I should have so much information about the birds that I am sure some professor would give me a degree for it."
"You must stay, then," said Violet.

"Tell me, Violet," he asked shyly, "do you still feel sorry for me?"

"Your present state is far from pitiable."

"Nor hate me?"

"It has been long since I did that."

"Then perhaps there is hope for me," he said.
Chapter 34

TWO LETTERS

Toward the end of September, Edwin and his bride went North, as they had long planned to do. A month later, Elvira wrote the following letter:

U. S. A.
October 29, 1948.

Dearest Violet:

I have been desiring for a long while to tell you all that has happened since we parted, but there has always been so much to do that I could not find time to write the kind of letter that I wished to send you. Now I have a quiet evening to write just a few of the things that I should tell if I could be with you, as I long to be.

The first thing we did after arriving in this vast country was to spend five days seeing Washington, as a sort of belated honeymoon. We certainly did not see all that was worth seeing — one might profitably spend that much time in one of the museums or art galleries alone — but that was a large enough dose of concentrated sight-seeing, and we were very tired when it was over. Sight-seeing should be done little by little, so that you can absorb one or a few notable things at a time; but I understand that people who live in cities where there are many things to be seen are often too indolent to see them, except perhaps when they have a visitor from out of town whom they wish to impress or amuse. What impressed me most in Washington was the
hugeness of the public buildings, and the stateliness of some. What a contrast with our little country, where everything is so small and intimate and cozy! Edwin believes that there is too much government. When you see these immense office buildings, with their thousands and thousands of workers, you suspect that he is right. And it is frightening to think that one of the biggest of all, the Pentagon, is devoted wholly to war. I am in the future will have glad that Costa Rica has no army; but it is fortunate to have the immense might of the United States to protect it from aggressive powers across the seas.

From Washington, we went to visit Aunt Florence and Uncle Norman. They told us to stay with them until we found a satisfactory apartment, which took about a week. Aunt Florence said that Edwin had lived with her so long that she regards him as a son, and me as her new daughter. She wished to give us a wedding present, and when she saw that my coat was too thin for the cold winters here, she offered to buy me a new one. We went together to a huge store, which had such a bewildering array of women's coats that I was confused. Aunt Florence picked out for me one trimmed with fur; but I preferred a plain coat, for reasons which you will understand. Of course, we had to tell her and Uncle Norman everything that happened to us during the revolution, and to repeat the story whenever one of their frequent visitors arrived. When they heard how Harold lost his life saving Eugene, and how Don Guillermo and Edwin and Don Chico shot the pillagers next morning, killing two of them, Uncle Norman declared that his respect for his brother-in-law had
risen. He had supposed that William Fernley had raised his sons to be so meek that they would have stood by with folded hands while the bandits ransacked their house and carried off the women. He also said that now that he has seen a real Costa Rican—meaning me!—he would not rest content until he had visited the country. Aunt Florence told him that he was naughty. She is a dear, so kind and _simpatía_, but her husband is far too worldly for my taste.

It was not easy for us to find an apartment, as there is a great shortage of housing here since the war. We looked at a number of places of which the addresses were given to us at the university, before we found one that—I will not say we liked—we thought we could endure. We arrived rather late, and all the better small apartments had already been taken. Ours is on the third floor of a big old house, within walking distance of the campus, which is a great advantage. There are a bedroom, a kitchen in which we also eat, and a bathroom. The furnishings are somewhat shabby and the plumbing leaks—what a contrast with Aunt Florence's, elegantly appointed apartment!—and the rent is far from low. Although at home people with small incomes have domestic servants, here only the very wealthy can afford them; even Aunt Florence has only a part-time maid.

Since I must cook and keep the house clean myself (Edwin helps when he can), in addition to the courses I am taking and the lessons in Spanish that I give, I am glad that our apartment is no larger. If I were here alone, or if I had the prospect of spending years in this ugly house in an ugly street, I would
be miserable. But it is only for a short while; and we are both away much of the day, usually taking lunch at one of the cafeterias on the campus; and when Edwin and I are here together, it is heavenly even in these drab rooms. He is working hard on his dissertation, and I must exercise great self-control not to interrupt him when he is reading or writing. He says that my presence inspires him, but my voice disturbs him when he is trying to concentrate.

At the university, I am taking a course in elementary botany, with three lectures and two afternoons in the laboratory each week; also beginners’ courses in ornithology and the history of philosophy, both of which I greatly enjoy. We are now studying the old Greek philosophers, and Professor Wright is such a good lecturer that he brings them to life again. What colorful men they were, not stuffy as one expects a philosopher to be! Next semester I plan to take child-care, which is an extension course. I have six people in my Spanish class, and earn almost enough to pay for our food and rent. As you can imagine, my days are very full.

Last week we spent an evening at the home of Dr. Sparmann, Edwin’s botany professor. There was a most interesting talk, illustrated with lantern slides, by one of his former students who had spent the summer botanizing in the Solomon Islands; and afterward, refreshments were served. In December, Edwin is to give a talk on Costa Rica at the professor’s home. I had a pleasant tête-à-tête with Mrs. Sparmann, who asked many questions about our life in the tropics, and confided to me that her
husband considers Edwin one of his most brilliant students; but I should not tell him, because it might turn his head. But I did not suppose that she really expected a young wife to keep that a secret from her husband. She also said that she had no doubt that some day Edwin will be a professor. I did not tell her that I hoped he would not be. It is not that I lack respect for professors or think teaching an unworthy occupation — far from it! — but if Edwin got a professorship, it would probably be far from home. I would rather be in Costa Rica, where we are all close together; and I think the life on a farm, in the open air with plenty of growing things and birds around you, is best, especially for children.

We have made some delightful field trips: with the botany department to the mountains to look for rare plants, and with the ornithology class to the seashore to see migrating shore birds. Both of us wished that you could have been with us. This has been a beautiful mild autumn, and the country has been lovely with all the colorful foliage. Here in the fall of the year the vegetation makes a display which even the tropics can hardly rival. People here, including some botanists, suppose that the leaves of our tropical trees never take on bright colors before they drop, but, as you know, they are wrong. I remember that those of some of the trees at home, such as the tanger and the aguacatillo and the campana, become bright red or orange or yellow before falling, but usually only a few at a time; there is rarely a whole tree-full of vivid foliage, and never a whole forest changing color and shedding its leaves
within a few weeks; and that is what makes the difference.

Be kinder to me than I deserve and let us hear from you soon. How is Eugene making out with his studies and as your father's helper? How are the horses? Have you had the usual deluges this month? We both send love to all.

Fondly,

Elvira.

A fortnight later, Violet's reply arrived:

Selva Alegre,
November 7, 1948.

Dearest Elvira:

Your generous long letter of October 29th was read and enjoyed by all of us, including your father. Next to seeing you, having a letter from you is the best thing in the world. Now I am going to try to repay the debt I incurred for it, but that will be difficult.

Although hardly two months have passed since you and Edwin left us, it seems an age. We all miss you more than we can tell, but, as is to be expected, your father seems to miss you most of all. He often comes to eat a meal with us, and spends far more time here at Selva Alegre than while you were with him. We think that when Elena graduates from the college, a few months hence, she should come and keep house for him, as you did for so long; although she will find it hard to fill your place. But we wonder whether she will, as she is so fond of the city and its pleasures. Of course, the best would be for your mother to live at Santa Teresa; but she probably would not wish to do so until the last of your sisters has finished
school and possibly also found a husband, which will be years
from now. The other day, Don Mariano said that if, after Edwin
has received his degree, he and you would return to live at
Santa Teresa and manage the farm, you could have a large share
of what you could make it earn. He would try to get into some
business in or near the city, so that he could be with his
family. All of us, and especially Father and Mother, would be
delighted to have you so near us.

Both of them have been well. Mother has had a touch of
rheumatism, as she often does at the wettest time of the year.
Although annoying, it has not been severe enough to incapacitate
her in any way. We hope that these attacks will not become
worse over the years. Eugene has been a great help to Father.
Nearly always it is he who receives the coffee from the pickers
and records how much each has gathered, as Harold did last year.
About once a week, he goes to Ureña for the mail and to attend
to various matters, usually riding Harold's Principe. How
strange is this life, in which one passes away and another
takes his place! I do not know whether we should be more sad
that people go, or glad that there are others to prevent their
places from remaining vacant. Anyhow, since Harold lost his life
saving Gene, the latter believes that he should, as far as pos-
sible, do Harold's work on the farm, although he realizes that
it is difficult for anyone else to fill a son's place in his
parents' affections. Nevertheless, both Mother and Father have
grown very fond of Gene, and would miss him greatly if he left.
After Edwin left Santa Teresa, Callip would not stay there with your Rosilla. He has become amazingly adept at opening gates, and as often as he was taken back there, he would return here. Finally, we decided that he should be permitted to stay where he prefers to be. Gene takes care of him and the other horses, as Harold used to do while Edwin was away. Gene says that he likes to care for Callip, for in doing so he feels that he is serving Edwin. If Harold were here, he would certainly say that Gene is spoiling Callip even worse than his master used to do.

Last month it rained very hard. There was one *temporal* that continued for three days with hardly a break. A number of bridges were washed out all over the district, including the small one over the creek between here and Santa Teresa. The neighbors got together and promptly replaced it. We hear that the new government is going to build a proper suspension bridge, with concrete towers and all that goes with it, over the Río General between here and Ureña. It's not too soon, as that rickety old wooden bridge makes me shiver every time I must cross it. Do you remember how the former government started to build an iron bridge some years ago, then hauled the girders away, because this canton did not support it in the elections?

The six golden-naped woodpeckers that we have been watching still sleep together in the hole they carved after the nest hole fell. Gene has been recording the arrival of the migrant birds from the North, and I have been helping him. The little gray
Tennessee warblers have come in great numbers, and many of them eat our bananas along with the tanagers and honeycreepers and Baltimore orioles. Gene was surprised by this, as few wood warblers are frugivorous; no other kind has ever been seen on our feeding shelf. Last month two summer tanagers arrived, a mature male who was all red and a young male whose yellow plumage was tinged with red. For several days, they chased each other through the trees around the house, singing at intervals and uttering their queer throaty notes, half liquid and half harsh; but we did not see them clash together. Each wanted the garden as his exclusive winter territory. Finally, the yellow tanager left, and the red one remained in possession. Then he proceeded to tear apart most of the wasps' nests attached to the various buildings, to eat the tender larvae and pupae. He even ruined the flat gray nests whose walls contain innumerable little clear areas, like windows of mice—which we thought was a pity.

I have been saving the greatest news until last. Can you guess what it is? Just two days ago, Gene asked whether I thought that I could live happily with him for ever. I replied that I did not know anybody else with whom I would be happier. We plan to be married in January, by the governor, as you were. He thinks that his parents may come down to attend the wedding and become acquainted with the bride and her family. We wish that you and Edwin could come, too, but we realize that it would hardly be possible, because of the expense and the interruption
of your work. There will be no big reception, such as your parents gave for your wedding; but neither of us will complain about that. Then we plan to continue living here until next fall, and we hope that together we can make such complete studies of the birds that they will fill a book. Gene is hopeful about getting a scholarship or a research grant that will help to pay our expenses in the States, while he writes his dissertation and completes his work for his doctor's degree. Probably I can augment our income by giving lessons in Spanish, as you are doing. I know that my pronunciation is not as correct as yours, but it will pass; anyhow, most North Americans are not very particular about how they pronounce foreign languages.

Father and Mother are pleased about my marriage, as they think that Gene is just the man for me. They hope that one of their children, and preferably both, will eventually settle down to live with or near them; and I think it will be most unfortunate if it does not work out that way. But they realize that bigger opportunities are to be found elsewhere, and are resigned to being separated from us, if so it must be. They are so unselfish! We should certainly make every effort to work out some arrangement whereby we can all live close together, even if it is not here. But where will we find a more beautiful spot, or one that we love more, than Aguas Claras where we grew up?

Do you remember that night during the revolution when we were talking together as we went to bed, and you said that
time would efface the painful impression that an exceptionally fine man had made on me? I wish that I could report that I had wholly forgotten what I saw that afternoon when I took the cookies to Gene, but it would be untrue. The unfortunate memory persists, despite all my efforts to banish it into oblivion. It is still there, even if it is buried under a thousand pleasant recollections of my association with Gene during these past months. It is easier to forgive than to forget. I am sure that I love Eugene as much as you love Edwin; and I respect him for all his sterling qualities; and it would be precious to me to know that he had never done anything so unworthy of himself. I suppose that such lapses from perfect rectitude are an almost inevitable consequence of our human ignorance and frailty; so that few of us are spared the pain they bring when, despite ourselves, they intrude into our recollections of our own lives or of those we love. Yet I am certain that, if we all had excellent examples and guidance from an early age, such distressing memories would be fewer; and I am determined that, if ever I am blessed with children, no effort shall be spared to help them avoid conduct that will one day be painful to remember, not only by themselves but also by those who love them.

With oceans of love for you and Edwin,
Violet.

"Poor Violet!" exclaimed Edwin, after Elvira had read the letter to him. "She deserves a husband whose life has been as consistently gentle and blameless as her own. Yet she might search long and far without finding another man as worthy of her as Eugene is."
"Do you remember," Elvira asked, "how you doubted whether it would be right to ask him to come, when his professor insisted that he collect birds? Yet in the end it worked out splendidly for him and Violet."

"I'm very glad for them. But I wish the same could be said about Harold and all the birds that Gene shot."

"Poor Edwin! You always try to take a course that will bring nothing but good to all creatures, but that often exceeds our human power."

"That is the fundamental tragedy of a too-crowded world which lacks a loving, compassionate Administrator, wise and powerful enough to prevent all disastrous conflict among its myriad inhabitants of innumerable kinds. Yet I can never, without ceasing to be myself, cease to struggle against this tragic predicament in which we are all involved."

"That's a noble cause to fight for," Elvira said. "Yet sometimes it seems futile to struggle against nature and a situation that has existed almost since life began."

"If a cause could not be noble without being completely successful, there would be little nobility in this world. But I don't believe that our effort is contrary to nature, because we ourselves belong to nature. When you and I and those who feel as we do revolt against all the cruelty and injustice that we behold around us, we seem to be nature herself, as evolution lifts her to higher levels, revolting against the crudities that mark the earlier stages of her onward progress. The rebellion is no less natural than the situation against which it
is directed. As evolution proceeds, and more and more of us
approach spiritual maturity, this natural protest against the
crudities of nature will grow ever stronger and more effective,
so that it is bound to have far-reaching results. But futile
or not, I can never cease to fight against a situation in
which I can never acquiesce."

"Nor I to fight with you, my gentle warrior," said Elvira,
bending over Edwin and tenderly planting a kiss on his forehead.
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