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THE LAND: THE PEOPLE

This land is the Paradise of the Lord.

Alfonso X, 1252-1284

Spain is like a great castle that rises from the sea. The entire perimeter of the country is marked by ranges of mountains. Within the ring of these soaring walls of granite lies the courtyard of the castle, the vast tableland of Castile. Some of the higher surrounding peaks are covered with snow during many months of the year, hence the name *Sierra Nevada* (snow-covered sierra), a name the Spaniards brought to the United States. The mountains of Spain have, in general, a harsh and lonely aspect. They are craggy, rough, serpentine, lofty, frequently scarped; they have surprisingly few trees and are sparsely populated. They are seen to best advantage at sunrise or at sunset when a great sweep of rose-colored or lilac shadow clothes them with a majestic serenity.

To the ancients the shape of Spain resembled a bull's hide staked out in the sun. The comparison is an apt one, but gives an insufficient idea of the gouged out and serrated character of the land. The entire nation is a vast jumble of mountains, running in almost all directions, thus effectively walling off the distinctive regions. Even the central tableland of Castile is broken into smaller segments by transverse interior ranges. Madrid, the capital, close to the geographic heart of the country, is only thirty-five miles south of the Guadarrama range whose lowest pass to the north is 4,700 feet above sea level.

The traveler in Spain is seldom out of the sight of mountains. They are the most typical feature of the physiography of "the hard land of Iberia."

The geographic unity of Spain, therefore, is an illusion. Although the country has a compact appearance on the map, her various regions were, for centuries, mutually inaccessible. The locomotive and the airplane have reduced this inaccessibility, but communications in Spain are still behind those of Italy. The country's compact land mass is geographically subdivided into smaller regions which correspond roughly to the old Roman areas of the peninsula, and reflect more precisely still the petty Spanish kingdoms of medieval times. Each of these separate regions is characterized by geographic, climatic, cultural, psychological, even linguistic differences. In many areas the children speak only the local dialect until they enter school, where they are taught Castilian. A few miles outside of metropolitan Barcelona live thousands of adult countryfolk who, sans benefit of schooling, do not know Spanish. Catalan is their language; they are proud of it, and want no other.

Pío Baroja, possibly the greatest Spanish novelist of this century (Hemingway called him "Master"), was a Basque who did not learn Castilian until he attended school. His Spanish style strikes many Castilians as having an odd and acrid quality.

My difficulty in writing Castilian, [he says in his autobiography] does not arise from any deficiency in grammar nor any want of syntax. I fail in measure, in rhythm of style, and this shocks those who open my books for the first time. They note that there is something about them that does not sound right, which is due to the fact that there is a manner of respiration in them, a system of pauses, which is not traditionally Castilian.¹

Sometimes, in considering the language and attitudes of the inhabitants of the outlying regions of Spain, it will be noted that far more than the respiration is different. There is a considerable basis of truth in the old statement that every Spaniard's first loyalty is to his *patria chica*, his small homeland or native region. Ask him where he is from and the answer will almost invariably be: *Soy hijo de Galicia*, *soy hijo de Granada*, "I am a son of Galicia, I am a son of Granada," or of Asturias, León, Navarre, Aragon, Castilla, Valencia, Catalonia, or Andalusia. Perhaps, after that, he is willing to be a Spaniard. If a fair plebiscite were held today on this very issue in Catalonia, the province of which Barcelona is the capital, no one could foretell what the results might be. During the Spanish civil

war (1936-1939) there still existed "the Catalan republic," and autonomy in that region has never ceased to be an explosive issue. Thus, the struggle for a stronger nationhood, carried on unceasingly for so many centuries by the Castilians, has been impeded at every step by this primary loyalty to the native region. Nevertheless, the core spirit of Spain or *España* as we know her today is Castilian; but the core of the apple is not its fruit. It bears only the protective fiber and the seeds.

To keep the record straight it must be pointed out that this longing for separatism, so strong in Catalonia and in the Basque provinces, does not express itself with such vigor in the other regions, where Castilian political hegemony is an accepted fact of life. Local intransigence asserts itself here in other ways, in the culture, in the psychology, and in the customs of the inhabitants. This excessive regionalism emerges as one of the basic weaknesses of whatever system of national government the Spaniards have devised. Symptomatic of this disunion for many centuries was the country's lack of a fixed capital. Paris and London have been the centers and capitals of their respective countries since their foundation. The capital of Spain was successively Toledo, León, Burgos, Seville, Valladolid, Segovia, and other cities. Madrid was only a sprawling country town when Philip II finally moved his capital there from Toledo in 1561. But by this time Spanish character was formed, regional loyalties were fixed, and the new capital, despite its phenomenal growth in population in recent years, has presided over the decline of Spain as a great power.

The climate of Spain is as variegated as its geography. The wet, green, cloud-filled northwest (Galicia and Asturias) differs from subtropical southern Spain (Andalusia) as much as Vermont does from Texas. The wide, blue *rías* (fjords) of Galicia are a far cry from the shrunken rivers of Castile, the Adaja of Avila, and the Manzanares at Madrid. The fertile *vega* of Granada does not faintly resemble the red-brown steppes of Segovia or the calcined sterility of certain areas around Murcia where the slight moisture that falls dries up quicker than a woman's tears. There are, nevertheless, two principal climatic zones in Spain. The northern perimeter of the country (Pyrenees and Cantabrian areas) constitutes the cool, wet belt; the much larger central and southern portion of the country is the dry and "sunny Spain" of song and story. Botanically this division may be noted by the oleander (*adelfa*) and carob trees (*algarrobos*) of the south, and their general absence in the north.

The central tableland of Castile comprises approximately 60 per cent of the total area of Spain. The elevation of this great plateau varies between two thousand and three thousand feet. This Castilian *meseta* is not only the heart but also the citadel of Spain. It is a land of dryness, of treeless mountains, and of waterless plains. The air is clear and sharp, blistering in summer, bitterly cold in winter. *Nueve meses de invierno y tres de infierno* ("Nine months of winter and three of hell"), says the proverb. The icy blasts that sweep down on Madrid from the Guadarramas in midwinter have frozen sentries at their posts. Sun and shadow in Madrid in any month of the year can be poles apart. The plateau air is like a rarefied gas responding readily to the heat or cold.

A great feeling of loftiness and space pervades the atmosphere of Castile. This is the part of Spain that has given to the country its stern character, its primitive robustness, its stoic endurance to pain and suffering, its vitality and its bareness. Castile is a stark and flinty land, emblematic of its inhabitants, formerly a land of castles (hence its name), today an area of rock-fenced fields, of stark denuded landscapes, of vast silences and great distances. A Spanish proverb states: "There is in Castile hardly a branch on which a bird may light." The thick forests of ancient times have long since disappeared. Even the houses and fences are now of stone. The few trees are mostly *encinas*, a scrubby wild oak of unimpressive proportions. Everywhere there are rocks, granitic mountains, gouged-out, eroded fields, horizons that are monkish in their austerity.

The Cid, that renowned warrior hero whose dignity and courage are made immortal in the starkly beautiful epic of Spanish literature, *The Poem of the Cid*, was a Castilian. Also Castilian were Fernando the Saint, who drove the Moors from Sevilla, and his son, Alfonso X, the Learned, the famous scholar king who gathered around himself the most brilliant minds of his day (Moors, Hebrews, and Christians). Isabella the Catholic, wife of Ferdinand, was a Castilian, and so was Miguel Cervantes, most famous of all Spanish writers. The great literature of Spain is also Castilian; even when written by persons from other regions the language is *castellano*.

Castile is likewise the key to Spain's communication systems. Madrid, in the very center of the Castilian *meseta*, is the hub or axis of all rail, highway, and air lines in the country. Like the spokes in a wheel all lines depart from Madrid. The Spanish railways were never outstanding for their comfort or for their modernity, but now,

despite their rather generally outworn equipment, they do link together most of the peninsula.

The railway that goes from Madrid into Galicia or the Cantabrian area gradually leaves the Castilian plateau and climbs steadily upward to enter an area of transverse mountains through which it turns and winds like a serpent of steel slowly boring into earth and rock. There are so many tunnels that the pupils of one's eyes scarcely have time to get used to the light when suddenly the train hurls itself again into a dark and cavernous labyrinth that pierces another mountain. The inaccessibility of the outlying areas of the peninsula is made clear by these coiled strings of tunnels and the many miles of precarious ledges along which the railway must pass, as laboriously, sometimes at a snail's pace, it gnaws up the distance.

The first railway in Spain was that which ran from Barcelona to Mataró in 1848; the second was the line from Madrid to Aranjuez in 1851. The Spaniards were a few years late in getting their trains, as they have been a few years late in getting nearly every other product of industrial civilization. However, people in Spain were not completely ignorant of what a railway looked like, for as early as 1830 a Spanish book (printed in London, to be sure) carried a rude sketch of the new steam engine and its wagons. This book contained a drawing of a seaport in which there was a factory belching smoke, and in front of it a small square box of steel, also spewing smoke; this was followed by some odd-looking coaches separated from each other by at least a yard, and across these open spaces were links of chain. It was not until eighteen years later, as we have pointed out, that there was a real train on Spanish soil. This was twenty-three years later than the English had their first steam rail line, eighteen years later than the United States, and eighteen years later than neighboring France.

The idea of a rail line linking Spain with France naturally occurred to some Spaniards. But the memory of the French invasions of 1808 and 1823 was still vivid in many minds, and the reception given the suggestion was anything but enthusiastic. In 1842, as a matter of fact, the construction of an ordinary road between Pamplona and France was discussed in the Spanish senate, and one senator, a certain General Seaone, opposed it vigorously. "Lack of foresight, and a very great lack of foresight indeed," remarked the general, "was the opening of the highway through Irun. Spain weeps for this, and God forbid that we should have cause to weep anew." Another senator,

González Castejón, was even more vehement in his plea: "My constant opinion," said this gentleman, "has been that never, for any reason whatsoever, should the Pyrenees be levelled; rather, on the contrary, other Pyrenees laid on top of the mountains we now have would suit us a great deal better." General Seaoane added that he would resign his position as senator before he would vote for such an iniquity. Forty years later, in 1881, a book on military matters in Spain pointed out that "anything that tends to isolate us is to our advantage. Some of the doors we already have open to France ought to be closed posthaste."²

The line between France and Madrid was not opened until 1860, and until very recent years (1947) there was no railway between Madrid and Valencia, the country's third largest city. It is a curious historic fact that George Stephenson himself, inventor of the first practical steam locomotive in 1814, visited Spain in the autumn of 1845. He had come to study the projected rail line between Madrid and France. Stephenson and the engineers who accompanied him were given the usual Spanish runaround by the Spanish government, and after frittering away several fruitless days in the capital the Britishers became bored and were ready to leave the country. The Spaniards invited them all to a bullfight, the eternal bullfight. Stephenson's biographer writes: "But as this was not exactly the object of their trip, they courteously refused the honor." Stephenson and his companions left Spain, and the railway was not constructed.

Spain is not only a castle, it is also, for all practical purposes, an island. The country's insularity is proverbial. She belongs neither to Europe nor to Africa, but is a way station in between with qualities of each. Spain has ceased to be European by virtue of her Moorish blood. "Africa begins at the Pyrenees," is more than an apt phrase. It expresses succinctly the exotic, half-oriental quality which gives to the people and to the culture of Spain their most distinctive features. One must be careful to specify that the Africa here referred to is not the lower part of the Dark Continent peopled by black men. It is northern Africa, the ancient homeland of the Iberians, of the Carthaginians, a Semitic race, of the Jews themselves, and of the Moors, composed of many Arabic-speaking groups. All of these ethnic and cultural groups have poured their blood and energy into the dead-end funnel that is Spain. The towering Pyrenees have sealed that funnel off from the rest of Europe more effectively than the Alps have ever sealed off Italy. Their average altitude, in fact, is

higher than that of the Alps. In any case, insularity is a state of mind and a way of life; it is not merely a matter of mountains, or altitudes, or islands.

The name that a country bears will often give some insight into the attitudes and history of her people. Spain was first called Iberia, a name given to the land by its Iberian inhabitants (of African stock). The name was supposedly based on the Iberian word for river, *Iber*. When these desert folk arrived in Spain they saw the country as a land of great rivers. But any creek would probably have appeared impressive to the desert-dwelling Iberians, who reached Spain in the centuries of prehistory, possibly as early as 3000 B.C. When the Greeks arrived on Spanish soil, around 600 B.C., they referred to the peninsula as *Hesperia*, which means "land of the setting sun." When the Carthaginians came around 300 B.C. they called the country *Ispania* (from *Sphan*, "rabbit"), which means "land of the rabbits." Strangely, the long-eared, timid creature appears on the early Iberian coins. The Romans arrived a century later and simply adopted the Carthaginian name of the country, calling it *Hispania*. Later, this became the present-day Spanish name for the country, *España*. From this is derived our adjective Hispanic, and the Spanish words *español*, *hispano*, etc. Thus, because of the Romans and their language, the rabbits won out over the sunset and over the rivers.

The rabbit, like the Spaniard, never moves in a straight line, nor at a steady speed. It leaps about at a rapid but jerky pace, hurling itself first in one direction, then in another. Rabbits have always been numerous in Spain. Cervantes mentions them frequently in his narration of the travels of Sancho and Don Quixote. A rabbit stew is one of the main dishes of the countryfolk of Spain. The Spanish phrase for a great deception is *dar gato por liebre* ("to give one a cat instead of a hare"). As in the time of Martial, the hare is considered to be the glory of the edible quadrupeds. Anywhere one walks in the Spanish countryside the wild hare may suddenly appear. As the proverb states: *Donde menos se piensa salta la liebre*, "Where one least expects it the hare leaps up." It is the typical phrase for anything unexpected. A few months ago I visited the site of the famous Moorish Palace of Medina Azahara, a few miles from Córdoba. Above the ruins of this once marvelous creation of Moorish art rise a series of rolling hills, dotted here and there with a few scrawny live oaks and olive trees. As we stood watching the scene, and listening to two Cordobese extol the incomparable virtues and incomparable grace

of the dead idol of Córdoba, Manolete, a couple of wild hares suddenly leapt from a clump of grass and scurried across the hillside. The Cordobese stopped talking momentarily and one of them pointed out: "Those hills are full of rabid hares. The people dare not eat them any more. It's an epidemic of national proportions." Then they went back to the conversation on Manolete. The whole scene was a symbol of the country today, rabid and hungry, but still talking excitedly of the bullfight, or of some past victory, some ancient glory.

The landscape of Spain is everywhere impressive. The misty green mountains and lovely wide *rias* of Galicia, the desolate rocky austerity of Castile, the flowing fountains and irrigated *vega* of Granada, the orange groves of Valencia and Seville, the long tortuous scar of the Tagus as it winds around Toledo, each of these in its own way possesses an element of singular beauty. Also a bigness, a feeling of spaciousness and of size. The only geographic element in Spain that suggests smallness is the rivers. The rivers of Spain are puny, regardless of what the Iberians might have thought about them. During a great part of the year most of them are but mere trickles of water straggling along the bottoms of their dried and rocky beds. Even the famed Guadalquivir, which made inland Seville one of the country's most important ports in ancient times and again in the sixteenth century, is an ugly, mud-colored river, unfit for navigation, and unlovely to the sight. Alexandre Dumas, who viewed the Guadalquivir in 1846, describes it well in one of those charming letters to the unidentified (and possibly nonexistent) French lady for whom he recounted his adventures in Spain.

You may have quite a wrong impression of the Guadalquivir, Madame, for Arab poets, who had never seen so much water, praised it to the skies, and French writers, never having seen it at all, believed the Arabs. True, Spanish writers could have revealed the less picturesque truth, but since it is the only river in their country large enough to take a boat, why should they decry it? When we got there we found that between the flat and uninteresting banks rolled a mass, not of water, but of liquid mud with the color and the consistency, if not the taste, of milk chocolate. We stood scratching our ears for a moment in perplexity and disappointment.³

If Alexandre Dumas was so severely disappointed, it is easy to imagine the feelings of the North American visitor, who has seen the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio, the Hudson, the Susquehanna, or the Columbia. Yet still today the poets of Spain sing the praises of the Guadalquivir. García Lorca, whose untimely death in

1936 cut short the career of one of Spain's most promising young writers, makes a frequent refrain of its evocative waters. "Voices of death sounded on the Guadalquivir." In all fairness be it said that rivers are not only geography, they are also history, and evoke a state of mind inseparable from the experiences of the people who have lived and died along their banks throughout the centuries. Thus, in spite of their puny size and insignificant flow, the rivers of Spain call forth a telluric and nostalgic quality which ties in with the gaunt spaciousness of the Spanish landscape and the monkish severity of its colors.

Quien dice España dice todo, says the Spaniard, proud of the infinite variety of his land. ("Who says Spain, says everything.") Other Spaniards, seeking for an element of hope or of stability in their country, affirm heatedly that beneath all the regional variations Spain is one, that there is some mysterious alchemy of the land which holds it all together, some common denominator which gives the Spaniards the same character, the same aspirations, the same ideals. This wishful thinking has been going on among Spaniards for centuries, but the reality is that Spain is not a homogeneous country, with homogeneous strivings. Spain is heterogeneous at the base, and heterodoxy is her true religion. The only common denominator is that of sharing the same land and the same history which has created Spaniards out of something that was not Spanish before. But this element of Spanishness, *españolismo*, is a brittle thing which, with all the courage in the world, suffers inevitable fragmentation under stress. Theoretically, the majority of Spaniards do, of course, want happiness, justice, freedom, and a higher standard of living. But this is merely an illusory bond of union much like that linking the pompous preachers and politicians who strongly espouse civic virtues and lower taxes.

True, both the landscape and the peoples of Spain suggest a wild but static vitality, energies that are not canalized, promises undeveloped, an unfulfilled destiny. There is an awful tenacity to the Spanish character, and a powerful will that is proud as Lucifer. But the Spaniards have never learned to live or to work together. Strabo, the famous Greek geographer, wrote that the ancient Iberians, who were dauntless warriors, never learned to hold their shields together in battle. They fought bravely, but it was always every man for himself. Greek, Carthaginian, and Roman soldiers, in far fewer numbers, were repeatedly able to defeat the native population simply because

of superior teamwork in battle. The static, primitive vitality of Spain has been repeatedly neutralized by a lack of direction, and a lack of concerted effort.

After living under the Romans for six centuries, then fighting the Moors for another eight centuries, the Spaniards did finally learn to hold their shields together, and by the fifteenth century the solid Spanish phalanx was the toughest military unit in the world. Perhaps there may be an equally long wait between learning how to fight together and learning how to live together. A modern Spanish writer, Pereda, in an essay on Spanish character, refers jocosely to the remarks of Chateaubriand, who once said that as soldiers the Spaniards were irresistible on the field of battle, but that as soon as the enemy had been dislodged from his position, they would throw themselves into it, a cigarette in the mouth and a guitar in the hands, to celebrate the victory. Pereda does not agree wholeheartedly with this estimate of Spanish temperament, but he sagely avers that if we

take a bit of the French color out of this picture, it will be true. Indeed, these remarks characterize us not only in warfare, but also in all the imaginable situations of life. Perhaps not the guitar, but national lassitude absorbs our five senses, and only when hunger pinches, or the itch to appear well-to-do and happy bites us, are we able to shake off our lethargy. We attack every problem with vigor, but indifference or violence soon overtakes us. And that's as far as we ever get. Our politics, our industry and our contemporary literature declare it well. Everyone else is ahead of us.

The words were written over half a century ago, but they characterize Spain today even better than they did the Spain of the time of Pereda. The same writer continues in these words:

We are always imitating everybody else, except when it comes to stepping ahead of the procession; we live on the castoffs of others and every rag that comes our way is greeted with mad enthusiasm, as if it were expressly cut for us. We view ourselves as *illustrious* statesmen, *invincible* warriors, *learned* economists, *distinguished* writers, *hard-working* industrialists, and *honorable* workers. We have had French codes of law, English codes of law, American codes of law; *revolutions* of every kind, *triumphs* of every caliber, *progress* of every size, manner, and form; yet at the present moment the citizen of Spain who owns his own bed considers himself well off.⁴

The Duke of Wellington once remarked that to boast of the strength of Spain was the national weakness. Today, more than a

century later, no one in Spain boasts of the strength of his country. Not militarily, in any case. But almost everyone still calls to mind her past power and majesty, and General Franco himself was a puny imitator of Philip II. Every Spaniard, whatever his affiliation or region, still boasts of being Spanish. "We *might* have been a Christian Greece," wrote Ganivet, in those sad words characterizing his unhappy nation. If Spaniards praise Spain, however, and no one denies them the right, they also bitterly censure Spain, as the above sentences indicate. The criticism of Spaniards by Spaniards is indeed almost a literary genre. "If a man speaks well of France, he is French, if he speaks well of England, he is English, but if he speaks ill of Spain, then he is a Spaniard," so runs the old jingle known to every schoolchild in the land of the rabbits. Spanish criticism is frequently brilliant, but it is seldom constructive. It makes fine literature, but it rarely passes from the printed page or the fiery café speech to the arena of social action. The Spaniard will die bravely for his country or for his beliefs; he will, indeed, die at the barricades of Oviedo, Madrid, or Córdoba for universal justice and liberty, but he is unable to subordinate his personal beliefs in a collective and progressive political endeavor.

Spanish pride is legendary. Unamuno, former president of the University of Salamanca and a noted Spanish philosopher, in one of his essays points out that the Spanish John Smith (Juan López), if he has no other source of pride, will be inordinately proud that he is Juan López, because in the whole world there can be no other Juan López exactly like him. All of the qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, that have combined to form his personality will never again reunite in precisely the same proportions in any other individual. The Spaniard, thus, does not feel that he is born to realize any social end, but that he is born primarily to realize himself. His sense of personal dignity is admirable at times, exasperating at others; selfhood is the center of his gravity. His individual person has a value that is sacred and irreplaceable. In the universe he may be nothing, but to himself he is everything. This excessive personalism undoubtedly contributes to a weakened statehood; it also causes the Spaniard to see his main value in personal achievement or creativity, hence the truly great men and women of Spain have been the individual artist, architect, writer, musician, saint, conquistador, adventurer, explorer, poet. These are all fields in which peak expression may be realized without going outside of one's own person.

The Spaniards spring from an Afro-Semitic race, with a little leavening from the Romans and the northern European tribes. But their essential base is Afro-Semitic. The keynote of this primitive racial mixture is overwhelming individuality. The people of Spain are Spanish in much the same way that the Jew is Jewish. The Jew may be from any one of a number of regions or cultures, but he still has a bedrock of Jewishness which is his main source of pride and to which he will doggedly cling, often without being able to define it, and which he will defend with his whole heart and even with his life. The Spaniard, part Jewish and part Moor in blood, in psychology, and in his interpretation of reality and of destiny, possesses a quality that is analogous. This quality is not by any means a weakness; it is a strength unknown to the peoples of other nations. The only unfortunate thing is that up to now the Spaniard's tremendous energy and racial pride have not been applied in those areas of collective expression which the Western world has come to hold as its primary values: economic organization, democratic government, social cohesion, industrial development, any kind of collective enterprise. In the arts Spain has never lagged behind, except in periods of quiet desperation. Her great men, Cervantes, El Greco, Velázquez, Goya, Góngora, "are the equals or more than the equals of the great men of any other country, while our actual life is not equal to that of Morocco or of Portugal."⁵

To this root cause of exaggerated individualism, continues the philosopher Unamuno, may be attributed all that Spaniards have accomplished in history: their transient imperial greatness, their permanent tenacity, their excellence in the arts. "This feeling of individuality lies deep down in the root of the race and cunning politicians have turned it to the advantage of their ambitions."

Pío Baroja, in the prologue of one of his novels, points out that the strong individualities of Spain have usually been unquiet and tumultuous.

Spain [he says], which never had a complete social system and has unfolded her life and her art by a series of spiritual convulsions, as men of strength and action have come bursting forth, today feels herself ruined in her eruptive life, and longs to compete with other countries in their love for the commonplace and well-regulated and in their abhorrence for individuality.

In Spain, where the individual and only the individual was everything, the collectivist aspirations of other peoples are now accepted as indisputa-

ble dogmas. Today our country begins to offer a brilliant future to the man who can cry up general ideas and sentiments, even though these ideas and sentiments are at war with the genius of our race.⁶

Baroja wrote these words prior to the Franco regime. He was referring to the "democratic-bourgeois tendency of the day," not to the kind of Spanish fascism which induced Franco to attempt to revive Philip II's concept of the Spanish church-state. Baroja is wrong when he claims that the collectivist aspirations of other peoples now have common currency in Spain. General Franco's dynamics of "stepping courageously forward toward yesterday" was the final proof that such is not the case. But if the time should come when one of these collectivist aspirations turns into a religion (communism could be this religion), then watch out for the volcano!

Proud and poor, these two words fit the people of Spain like a glove. An old saying goes: "If God were not God he would be the King of Spain, and the King of France would be his cook." But the proverb which states that *altivez y pereza, llaves son de la pobreza* ("pride and lethargy are the keys of poverty") bears a closer scrutiny. The Spaniard, it is true, would prefer to be a soldier, a priest, or an adventurer rather than a laborer. But he is not lazy; he will carry out any task that is assigned to him with a diligence that is tireless. But he likes to perform it in his own way. The poverty of Spain comes from other things: a soil that has been denuded of trees and eroded by the rains, a government which has never had the people's welfare at heart, a system of latifundia or huge estates as outrageous of those of Persia or of Rome, which have left the masses of rural workers without land, a lack of decent housing, industry and technological development and, last of all, a wealthy class that will not share and a mass of workers who will not cooperate. These concrete items, not lethargy, explain the poverty of Spain. Is it any wonder that the Spaniard clings to pride, which is his only true wealth?

The proud and stoic attitude toward life of the Spaniard is, therefore, a philosophy of desperation. Seneca, a Roman born in Spain, expressed this attitude in cogent words: "Do not let yourself be conquered by anything alien to your spirit." Ganivet, a nineteenth century Spaniard, and a great admirer of Seneca, recapitulates the Roman writer's philosophy in these words:

Remember, in the midst of the accidents of life, that you have within you a vital energy, something strong and indestructible, like a diamantine axis,

around which turn the petty happenings that form the fabric of your daily life; and whatever things may befall you, be they prospering, adverse, or reviling in their contact, hold yourself in such a manner firm and erect, that at least it may always be said of you that you are a man.

This is Spanish to the bone [adds Ganivet] and it is so completely Spanish that Seneca did not have to invent it, because he found it already invented. All he needed to do was to pick it up and give it a permanent form, thus operating as true men of genius always operate. The Spanish spirit, rough, without form, skeletal and naked, does not cover that primitive nakedness with artificial clothes: it clothes itself with the fig leaf of Senecquism.⁷

Then Ganivet points out that this same Senecquism has deeply touched the religious, moral, and even legal fiber of Spain, that it has penetrated Spanish art and folklore, that it is omnipresent in the proverbs, maxims, and sayings of the common people, that it even permeates many branches of cultivated learning. We might add that the very atmosphere and earth of Spain, particularly of Castile, represent a kind of stoic climate and geography. And Castile was preeminently the land of soldiers; the stoic and the soldier are necessarily one.

"Cortés is the equal of any Da Vinci," affirms another distinguished Spaniard, thus asserting Spanish equality during the Renaissance with Italy herself. In a word, Italy's contribution to the Renaissance was her universal men, her men gifted in all the arts, while the principal contribution of Spain was the conquistador. On the one hand, men who created art, and on the other, men who created nations. Whether or not the dictum is true does not really matter; what matters is that this typifies the Spanish point of view and is generally accepted by Spaniards.

"Spain was Christian perhaps before Christ"; this is another of the pithy statements of Seneca. Christianity was taken up by the Spaniards with an enthusiasm unparalleled in any other country. It is also a kind of Christianity that differs considerably from that of the other Catholic countries, and has even less in common with the cold, logical, dry, unfeeling Protestantism of northern Europe. The reason for this is that the Spaniards never gave up their paganism; they simply added Christianity to a pagan base. God is a concrete presence in the religious imagery of Spain. Later still, they took from Moor and Jew a sensuous feeling for religion which never reached the Protestant countries. Religion became both a passion and an art, and

its ritual became a dazzling liturgy. Witness the brilliant pomp of Holy Week in Seville, where the Virgins are Byzantine empresses, witness the religious processions anywhere in Spain at Easter, witness the mysticism of many Spanish religious thinkers, a mysticism that is sensuality repressed by virtue and by misery.

Moor and Jew also gave to Spain that key concept of Spanish Catholicism: religion as a way to nationalism. With no other kind of unity to hold them together the petty Spanish states of medieval times made the banner of the Cross their military, and then their national standard. There have been only two successful crusades in history and Spain waged both: the crusade against the Moslem Moors, and the crusade to conquer and Christianize the pagan Indians of the New World. In Spain there never arose a single Protestant church. And throughout the Franco years, by governmental edict, no synagogue or Protestant church was allowed to put on its outside walls any kind of religious symbol, marking, letters, or identifying features of any kind whatsoever.

Spain is about twice the size of the British Isles and approximately the size of California plus about one-third of the state of Nevada. If we believe the ancient writers, it was once an Eden, a garden of splendor, of plenty and of delight. *Nihil otiosum, nihil sterile in Hispania* ("There was nothing idle, nothing barren in Spain"). This was a land of milk and honey, like the fabled Canaan of the children of Israel. It was an earthly paradise, as Alfonso X called it in his famous history. But now of all this richness and all these beauties so little is standing. The country remembers its past with a vital anguish that calls to mind some outworn god of antiquity lamenting the extinction of his cult. Ah, what this might have been, this poor, this tragic Spain! There is no region of Spain today that can compare in wealth to California. Still, her varied geography is the wonder of all travelers.

The principal regions of the country, beginning at the northwest corner, just above and bordering on Portugal, are as follows:

1. *The Cantabrian zone*, composed of Galicia, Asturias, and the Basque provinces. Of these Galicia is the most cloudy, foggy, and wet, but all three regions are green and cool, with fruitful fields, and an abundance of water. This is an area of rugged mountains, where the stone houses are perched firmly on hill and dale, and marked by a spiral of blue-gray smoke even in summer. Grains are stored in stone

or wooden chests called *hórreos*, which are raised from the ground on four legs in order to protect them from the rodents. Each bin of grain bears a cross at one end to invoke the protection of God. The country churches in these mountains are picturesque, gray and damp, of an anciency that is primitive and soul-stirring. The people of these mountains are deeply sentimental and melancholy; they have a passionate love of their homeland which in the Galician can become a real illness if he must live abroad. They call the sickness *morriña*, and celebrate it in song and story. The people in this part of Spain eat better than in the south, but they need to eat better in order to survive at all in their damp climate of eternal mists.

This region of Spain has produced many of the country's finest writers. Their descriptions of the Cantabrian mountains and its people are colored intensely with the inside view. The medieval school of Galician lyric poetry was western Spain's answer to the Provençal troubadour tradition which is much better known in European literary history. Also, some of the earliest songs preserved in Spain are those of a Galician minstrel of the thirteenth century named Martin Codax whose songs evoke the plaintive, mysterious, and nostalgic quality of this mountainous land. They were written to be sung by women whose men had gone off to war to fight the Moors; their words and melody are suffused with a sense of absence and loss. Some of these haunting songs, recently recorded, pull at the heart roots of a primitive past that lies buried within us deep in the unconscious.

Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885), illegitimate daughter of a Galician parish priest, has described her beloved province with exquisite feminine sensitivity. In her poems the beauty of the Galician landscape and the melancholy of its inhabitants are given form in simple, exquisite lines which call to mind the spontaneity and condensed emotive quality of folk couplets. Rosalía's tomb near Santiago is a regional shrine. In the prologue to one of her books Rosalía writes:

Lakes, cascades, torrents, flowering *vegas*, valleys, mountains, skies sometimes blue and serene as those of Italy, melancholy and clouded horizons, although always beautiful like those of Switzerland; tranquil and serene streams and shores, tempestuous capes that terrify and amaze by their gigantic and dull fury . . . immense seas . . . what more shall I say? There is no pen that can enumerate so many charms. The earth is covered in all seasons of the year with green grasses, herbs and flowers; the mountains are clad with pine trees, with oaks and with *salgueiros*; the