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## Preface

In compiling a world anthology of supernatural tales, I searched the literatures of various countries for stories I intended to collect in one volume. This volume I conceived as a sort of museum of universal horrors. For Poland, I procured the collection published in 1952 by Julian Tuwim,<sup>1</sup> but as I do not know Polish, I asked a friend to look it over and give me a brief oral report on those stories that struck him as suitable to my purpose. One of those tales was "Commander de Toralva" by Jan Potocki.<sup>2</sup> It looked to me like a shameless plagiarism of one of Washington Irving's well-known tales: "The Grand Prior of Min-

<sup>1</sup> *Polska Nowela fantastyczna*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2 vols., 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced *Potołski*.

orca." I soon realized, however, that I was mistaken. Irving's tale was published in 1855 and Count Potocki died in 1815, forty years before.

In the narrative that precedes "The Grand Prior of Minorca," Washington Irving explains that he first heard the tale he is about to tell from the Chevalier L——, <sup>1</sup> but that having lost his notes, he later found a similar tale in some French memoirs published under the aegis of the great adventurer, Cagliostro. One snowy day in the country, Irving continues, he amused himself by translating the story roughly into English "for a group of young people gathered around the Christmas tree."

From a note of Tuwim's I learned, on the other hand, that the story of "Commander de Toralva" was an episode from a book written in French by Potocki and entitled *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* ("Manuscript Found in Saragossa"). It was a series of short stories divided into Days, in the style of ancient decamerons or heptamerons, the whole being connected by a loosely woven plot or intrigue. The entire work consists of a foreword, sixty-six of those Days and a conclusion. A first part was published in two sequences in only a few copies and with no indication of place or date; actually it was published in St. Petersburg in 1804 and 1805 (Vol. I, 158 pages; Vol. II, 48 pages). That first part corresponds to Days 1-13. The text breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, undoubtedly because the author set off on a journey. Potocki had a second part published in Paris in 1813 by Gide fils, 2 rue Colbert, near the rue Vivienne and H. Nicolle, 12 rue de Seine. It consists of four slender volumes bearing the title: "Avadoro, A Spanish Story by M.L.C.J.P." (in other words, M. le Comte Jan Potocki). It tells, in a number of loosely connected stories, the adventures of a gypsy chief, as well as adventures other men have told him. It is essentially a sequel to the St. Petersburg text, of which it reproduces the last two Days. As the gypsy leader had already appeared

<sup>1</sup> The Chevalier Landolini, whom Irving met on Malta in 1805 or 1806. See Stanley T. Williams, "The Life of Washington Irving," New York, 1935; Vol. I, 62; II, 325.

in those last two Days of the Petersburg text, the new story really begins with his entrance on stage—that is, on the twelfth Day. From then on it reproduces, either partially or in full, Days 15 to 18, 20, 26 to 27, 47 to 56.

The following year, the same Gide fils (this time at 20 rue Saint-Marc) published in three volumes, from the St. Petersburg text, and in the same format, *Les Dix Jours d'Alphonse van Worden* ("The Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden"), except for a few changes I shall speak of later. Days 12 and 13, which had been reprinted in *Avadoro*, are missing, as is also Day 11. (The latter is undoubtedly omitted because the only stories it contains are two well-known tales, one borrowed from Philostratus, the other from Pliny, the Younger.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the work ends with a still unpublished episode, "The Story of Rebecca" that corresponds to Day 14 of the complete text. This episode is joined to Day 11 by a brief transition; in reality it continues the Petersburg text at the very place where the latter is broken off.

The Bibliothèque Nationale owns the three volumes of van Worden, the four volumes of *Avadoro* and the first volume of *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, published in St. Petersburg—if one can call a volume something that looks more like a set of proofs. Bound in red leather, the back bears the words: "First Decameron." The title is written in ink on the flyleaf: (*Histoire d'*) *Alphonse van Worden (ou tirée d'un) Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*.<sup>2</sup> Below, in pencil, is the author's name: Potocki, Jan. Alongside is a red seal with the words: "Gift no. 2693." The printed text does not go beyond page 156. The last two pages are re-copied in ink. There are a fairly large number of penciled corrections in the text, most of them strictly typographical. Other corrections suggest actual changes in style.

On the flyleaf is pasted a fragment of a printed notice, on the back of which is the following handwritten note (the words in parentheses are crossed out on the original):

<sup>1</sup> Story of Athenagoras (Pliny, *Lettres*, VI, 27) and Menippus (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.*, IV, 25).

<sup>2</sup> The words in parentheses are crossed out in ink. (Story of) Alfonso van Worden (or) (taken from a ) Manuscript found in Saragossa.

May one not suppose that (Count P.) (it is Nodier) that (the) it is Nodier whom Klaproth indicated in 1829 as the person (in whose hands the) charged to review the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* before printing, and in whose hands the manuscript copy has remained. And (would it not be Nodier who, with the consent . . .) isn't it possible (that as custodian) that having (a man . . .) the work of Count Jan Potocki in his hands, he may have tried to get the most out of it from a literary and a financial point of view? But it is no less astonishing that he felt obliged to keep silent at the time of the scandalous lawsuit against Count de Worchamps<sup>1</sup> who (two words crossed out: illegible) had thought he could publish in the . . . the *Journ . . . La Presse* in 1841-42, at first under the title of *Le Val funeste*, then as *l'Hist. de don Benito d'Almuse-nar*, so-called excerpts from Cagliostro's unpublished memoirs. Those excerpts were merely a copy of *Avadoro* and of *Journées de la Vie d'Alphonse van Worden*. (It was there).

This *Val funeste* was an obvious steal. Nodier, who did not die until 1844 (cf) could have enlightened the law on that subject and he did not breathe a word. (He. . . . *four words crossed out. Illegible*).

Number 2693 refers to a gift made on August 6th, 1889, by Mme. Bourgeois, née Barbier. In this case Nodier's accuser is, in all probability, Ant.-Alex Barbier, author of the *Dictionnaire des Anonymes*, in which he definitely attributes *Avadoro* and *van Worden* to Potocki. It will rest with Nodier's biographers to comment on those insinuations.<sup>2</sup> These few lines, therefore, clarify Washington Irving's

<sup>1</sup> In reality Maurice Cousin, Count de Courchamps, author of *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy*. The plagiarist was denounced by *Le National*, October 13, 1841. At first Courchamps insisted that he was the one who had been plagiarized in the 1813-1814 editions. He claimed to have had the manuscripts from 1810 and to have lent them to a Polish nobleman. Unfortunately for him, M. Léon Duval, who pleaded for *La Presse*, was able to produce a sample of the Petersburg proofs which Potocki had sent to his friend General Senovert. On this famous lawsuit (Berryer defended the indefensible Courchamps) see J. M. Quéraud, *Les Supercheries littéraires dévoilées*, Vol. I, Paris, 1857. See Cagliostro, pp. 177-193.

<sup>2</sup> They will have to take into account those pages in which Paul Lacroix, *Enigmes et Découvertes bibliographiques*, Paris, 1866, pp. 57-69, declares that he did not hesitate at the time to attribute the two works to Nodier and he concludes boldly: "Well, I guessed right sixteen years ago. Charles Nodier is really the sole author of *Avadoro* and of *The Ten*

ing's "borrowing" and the fact that Irving could take cover behind the authority—for that matter extremely doubtful—of the famous Cagliostro. Irving found Courchamps' copy of Potocki's story in *La Presse* in 1841-42. That is the text he translates into English and which appears in 1855 in his collection "Wolfert's Roost." In all probability Irving never knew that he was plagiarizing a great Polish nobleman who had died many years before. Irving must be forgiven a translation which he presents as such, though inferring that this is an author's ruse to lend credibility to a piece of fiction. We should be all the more indulgent, as Irving himself was the victim of an identical "steal." One of his *Tales of a Traveler* (1824), "The Adventure of a German Student," was translated and adapted by Petrus Borel in 1843, under the title: "Gottfried Wolfgang."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this time, too, the "borrowing" had been half admitted, half dissimulated by an ingenious and equivocal presentation.

And with this, the career of the French original ends.

In 1847, Edmund Chojecki brought out a Polish version of the entire work (except for an autographed manuscript now missing) in six volumes at Lipsk-Leipzig, under the title: *Rekopiz Znaleziony w Saragossie*. This translation was published again in 1857, 1863, 1917 and 1950. Finally a critical edition by M. Leszek Kukulski appeared in Warsaw in 1956. Almost simultaneously two important fragments of the original French text were discovered in the archives of the Potocki family at Krzeszowice near Cracow: (1) a copy entitled, "Fourth Decameron," checked and corrected by the author and containing Days 31 to 40; (2) a rough draft of Days 40 to 44 and fragments of Days 10, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 33, 39 and 45.

M. Kukulski, to whose courtesy I owe this information, is at present endeavoring to reconstruct the entire French

*Days in the Life of Alfonso van Worden!* The autographed manuscript exists: it is here before my eyes." But was that mysterious manuscript about which Lacroix gives no details and which, today, would be damaging evidence against Nodier, actually in Nodier's handwriting?

<sup>1</sup> See the preface to "The Phantom Isle and Other Tales" by Washington Irving, translated by R. Benayoun, Paris, 1951, p. 12.

text of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*. He will use the five sources already mentioned: (1) the two St. Petersburg volumes for Days 1 to 12 and part of Day 13; (2) *Alphonse van Worden* (1814) for Day 14 and for the general foreword which does not appear in the St. Petersburg edition; (3) *Avadoro* (1813) for Days 15, 18, 20, 26-29, 47-56; (4) the corrected copy from the Potocki archives for Days 31-40; (5) the rough draft from the same archives for Days 19, 22-25, 29, and 41-45. For the rest—that is, for a little less than a fifth of the work, representing chiefly Days 21, 30, 46, 57-66 and the conclusion, he will be obliged to retranslate into French Edmund Chojecki's Polish version of 1847. I wish him a prompt and complete success. Historians of French literature should be able to judge in its entirety, and with the least possible delay, a work to whose importance and quality the fragments now available bear testimony. In the meantime, I am taking the initiative of issuing the principal part of the pages published in French during the author's lifetime, with his consent and under his supervision. As the copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale contains only the first part of the text printed in St. Petersburg, I have asked to be permitted access to the volume preserved in the Lenin-grad Library. It bears the number 6. 11. 2 24., and consists of two bundles of pages bound together. On the back of the binding there is one word in two lines: *Potockiana*. Inside the book, on the back of the cover, is pasted a strip of paper bearing the following information in handwriting:

Count Jan Potocki had these pages printed in Petersburg in 1805, shortly before his departure for Mongolia (at the time an embassy was sent to China), without title or ending, reserving the right to continue it or not at some future date when his imagination, to which he has given free rein in this work, would tempt him to do so.

The first series of sheets ends on page 158 at the bottom of which we read: "End of the First Decameron." And below it: "Transcribed in 100 copies." The text of the second part is broken off abruptly in the middle of a sentence at the bottom of page 48. The sentence should continue on p. 49, with which the thirteenth Day begins. That series was undoubtedly never printed, nor were those that

follow. I reproduce this text in full and complete it with the rather provisional conclusion that forms the ending of the *Dix Jours*. On the other hand, I reprint only a few excerpts from *Avadoro*.

I have two principal reasons for not publishing in its entirety what the author himself gave the public. In the first place, the text of *Avadoro* is fragmentary and not very reliable. It is better to wait till M. Kukulski has procured a less questionable version by using as a basis the manuscripts from Krzeszowice with the aid of Chojecki's translation. In the second place, I am particularly interested in emphasizing the import of Potocki's work on literature of the supernatural. It is precisely in the early Days of the "Saragossa Manuscript" that the supernatural plays a leading role. Hence my decision.

Potocki's work remained unknown in France. It was written in French and, though the author bore one of the greatest names in Poland, his work appears to have gained recognition in his native land only by slow degrees. His compatriots at least have always considered Potocki one of the founders of Slavic archaeology. A distinguished author, archaeologist and ethnologist, Potocki's life merits a serious study.<sup>1</sup>

Born in 1761, Potocki was educated first in Poland, then in Geneva and in Lausanne. While still very young, he visited Italy, Sicily, Malta, Tunisia, Constantinople, Egypt. In 1788 he published in Paris an account of that journey: *Voyage en Turquie et en Egypte fait en l'année 1784*,<sup>2</sup> which he reprinted on his private presses in 1789. In his own country, however, he suddenly achieved fame by making a balloon ascension with M. Blanchard. In 1789, after a quarrel with the Polish government over the freedom of the press, he set up in his own castle a free printing

<sup>1</sup> In his *Jana hr. Potockiego Prace i Zaslugi Naukowe*, Warszawa, 1911, Aleksander Brückner has given a first and remarkable sketch of that life. Chapter III (pp. 23-44) treats of the "Saragossa Manuscript."

<sup>2</sup> Klaproth mentions, vaguely and with no references, a volume entitled *Voyage à Maroc* ("Journey to Morocco"): "It is the rarest of all Count Potocki's works. I have seen only one copy of it and I do not recall either the place it was printed or the date."

press (*Wolny Drukarnia*) on which he printed the two volumes of his *Essai sur l'Histoire universelle et recherches sur la Sarmatie*. In 1791, he traveled in England, Spain and Morocco. As captain in the Engineering Corps he took part in the campaign of 1792. From then on, he devoted himself to ancient history and archaeology. In 1795 he published in Hamburg his *Voyage dans quelques Parties de la Basse-Saxe pour la recherche des antiquités slaves ou vendes, fait en 1794 par le comte Jean Potocki*. In Vienna in 1796 he brought out a *Mémoire sur un nouveau Périple (sic) du Pont-Euxin, ainsi que sur la plus ancienne Histoire des Peuples du Taunus, du Caucase et de la Scythie*. The same year at Brunswick, he published in four volumes, *Fragments historiques et géographiques sur la Scythie, la Sarmatie et les Slaves*. Famous archaeologist and ethnologist, special adviser to Czar Alexander I, Potocki traveled in the Caucasus in 1798. In 1802, he published in St. Petersburg at The National Academy of Sciences, an "Early History of the Peoples of Russia; with a complete exposition of all the local, national and traditional ideas necessary to an understanding of the Fourth Book of Herodotus." This was followed in 1805 by a "Chronology" of the first two books of Manetho. At the same time, he quietly printed one hundred copies of the "Saragossa Manuscript." The Czar chose Potocki to head the scientific mission attached to Count Golovkine's embassy in Peking. That mission never reached Peking. It was turned back disdainfully from the Viceroy of Mongolia's camp. Discouraged, Potocki returned to St. Petersburg where he published in 1810, "Principles of Chronology for the Ages Anterior to the Olympiads," then a "Chronological Atlas of European Russia"; and finally in 1811, a "Description of the New Machine for Coining Money." In 1812, he retired to his estates. On December 2, 1815,<sup>1</sup> depressed, neurasthenic, he committed suicide.

Had I adhered to the principle that, to establish a text, one must choose the latest edition published during the

<sup>1</sup> Klaproth says, December 12, 1816.

author's lifetime, I would have followed for *Les dix journées d'Alphonse van Worden* the edition published by Gide fils in 1814. I had strong reasons for not doing so. The St. Petersburg text is superior from every point of view: it is more accurate and more complete. I have therefore reproduced the 1804-5 edition and added "The Story of Rebecca," with which the text published by Gide fils (1814) ends. In this way I believe I have procured a complete and authentic version of the entire first part of the book.

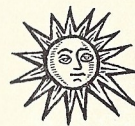
*Avadoro* is more picaresque than supernatural, the only supernatural tales in it being "The Story of the Terrible Pilgrim Hervas" and "The Story of the Princess of Monte-Salerno." "The Story of Leonora and the Duchess d'Avila," which I also include, contains no supernatural element, but thematically it belongs to the preceding series.

The Foreword does not appear in the St. Petersburg edition. I have taken it from the Paris edition of 1804-5. I disregarded the handwritten corrections in the copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale, except for obvious errors, typographical or others, to which I refer in a footnote or in parentheses. I have retained the 1804 text, but have modernized the orthography and the punctuation wherever a simple automatic change sufficed. However, I have scrupulously preserved *hh* in place of the Spanish *j*, as in *cortehho* (for *cortejo*), *Anduhhar* (for *Andujar*) or *fahha* (for *faja*). On the other hand, I have written *bolero* in place of *volero* and *sergente general* for *serhente heneral*. On occasion I have had to substitute a word omitted. It always appears in parentheses in the text.

I have preserved the same arrangement of tales in the Days as in the 1804 edition. The tales from *Avadoro* are from the 1813 edition, which I reprint unchanged, though that edition undoubtedly suffered the same sort of editorial treatment accorded to "The Ten Days" the following year. It is, however, the only text at present available in French. I feel it is my duty to reprint it while waiting for a better and more complete picture of Potocki's supernatural tales which, through a rare combination of fatalities, are still three-quarters unpublished and almost totally unknown in the language in which they were written. It is high time

that, after a delay of a century and a half, Potocki's work should find in French, as well as in European literature of the supernatural, the enviable position to which it is entitled.

*Roger Caillois*



**The Saragossa Manuscript**



## Foreword

As an officer in the French Army, I took part in the siege of Saragossa. A few days after the town was captured, having advanced to a somewhat isolated post, I noticed a small but rather well-built villa that I thought, at first, had not been visited by any Frenchman.

I was curious and decided to look it over. I knocked on the door, but seeing that it was not locked, I pushed it open and stepped inside. I called, I looked all around—nobody was there. To all appearances everything of value had been removed; only a few unimportant objects lay scattered around on tables and in drawers. I noticed, however, on the floor in one corner, a number of copybooks filled with writing, and I glanced over the contents. It was a manuscript written in Spanish. I knew very little of that language,

but enough to understand that this manuscript might prove entertaining. There was a lot in it about brigands, ghosts, cabalists; and nothing could be more suited to distract me from the fatigues of the campaign than the perusal of a fantastic novel. As I was confident that this book would never be restored to its lawful owner, I did not hesitate to take possession of it.

In time we were obliged to leave Saragossa and, as ill luck would have it, I was cut off from the main body of the army along with my detachment, and taken prisoner by the enemy. I thought my last hour had come. When we came to the place to which they were leading us, the Spaniards began to strip us of our belongings. I asked to be allowed to keep only one possession which could be of no use to them—the manuscript I had found. At first they made some difficulty about it, but at last they asked their captain's advice. He glanced hastily through it, came up to me and thanked me for having preserved intact a work he valued highly, as it contained the story of one of his ancestors. I told him how it had come into my hands. He took me home with him and, during the somewhat lengthy sojourn I made in his house, where I was treated with the utmost courtesy, I urged him to translate this work for me into French. I wrote it down at his dictation.

## Part one

### The first day

Count d'Olavidez had not yet established foreign settlements in the Sierra Morena—that lofty chain of mountains that separates Andalusia from La Mancha—which was at that time inhabited solely by smugglers, bandits and a few gypsies who had the reputation of eating the travelers they murdered, whence the source of the Spanish proverb: *Las Gitanas de Sierre Morena quieren carne de hombres.*

That is not all. It was said that the traveler who ventured into that wild region was assailed by a thousand terrors that would freeze the blood of the boldest man. He heard wailing voices mingled with thundering torrents and howling storms; false lights led him astray, and invisible hands pushed him towards the edge of bottomless precipices.

There were, it is true, a few *ventas*, or lonely inns, scattered along that disastrous road, but ghosts, more diabolical than the innkeepers themselves, had forced the latter to yield the place to them and retire to regions where their rest was troubled only by twinges of conscience—the sort of phantom that innkeepers know how to deal with. The innkeeper of Anduhhar called on St. James of Compostella to witness the truth of these amazing tales. And he added that since the bowmen of St. Hermandad had refused to lead expeditions over the Sierra Morena, the travelers either took the Jaen road or went by way of Estramadura.

I replied that this choice might be all very well for ordinary mortals, but as the king, Don Philip the Fifth, had graciously honored me with the rank of captain in the Walloon Guards, the sacred laws of honor forbade me to take the shortest route to Madrid without inquiring if it were also the most dangerous.

“My lord,” replied my host, “your grace will allow me to point out to him that if the king has honored him with a company of Guards before age has honored your grace’s chin with the slightest sign of down, it would be wise to exercise a little caution. Now, I say that when demons take over a region . . .”

He would have said much more, but I put spurs to my horse and did not draw rein until I was out of reach of his remonstrances. Then looking back, I saw him still waving wildly and pointing to the road to Estramadura in the distance. My valet, Lopez, and Moschito, my *zagal*, turned piteous eyes on me, as if to repeat the innkeeper’s warning. I pretended not to understand, and plunged into the thickets at the point where the settlement known as La Carlota has since been built.

At the very spot where today there is a relay station, there was in those days a shelter, well known to muleteers, who called it “Los Alcornoques”—or the green oaks—because of two beautiful oak trees that spread their shade over a gushing spring as it flowed into a marble watering-trough. It was the only water and the only shade to be found between Anduhhar and the inn, “Venta Quemada.” Though it was built in the middle of a desert, the inn was large

and spacious. It was, in reality, an old Moorish castle which the Marquis de Penna Quemada had had repaired; hence the name Venta Quemada. The Marquis had leased it to a citizen of Murcia, who had turned it into the largest hostelry on that route. Travelers left Anduhhar in the morning, dined at Los Alcornoques on provisions they had brought with them, and then slept at Venta Quemada. Sometimes they even spent all the next day there to rest up for the journey over the mountains and to buy fresh provisions. This is what I had planned to do.

But as we came within sight of a clump of green oaks, and I mentioned to Lopez the light meal we counted on having there, I perceived that Moschito was no longer with us; neither was the mule laden with our provisions. Lopez explained that the boy had dropped behind some hundred paces to make some repair to his mount’s packsaddle. We waited for him, then rode on a short distance, and halted to wait for him again. We called, we retraced our steps to search for him—but in vain. Moschito had vanished, taking with him our fondest hopes—in other words, our dinner. I was the only one fasting, for Lopez had never stopped nibbling on a Toboso cheese with which he had provided himself, but which, apparently, did nothing to raise his spirits for he kept muttering that “the Anduhhar innkeeper had told us so, and devils had certainly carried off poor Moschito.”

When we arrived at Los Alcornoques, I found on the watering-trough a basket, filled with fig leaves, that had probably been full of fruit and had been left behind by some traveler. Out of curiosity I rummaged around in it and had the pleasure of finding four beautiful figs and an orange. I offered Lopez two of the figs, but he refused them, saying he could wait till evening. I therefore ate all the fruit, after which I desired to quench my thirst at the nearby spring. Lopez stopped me, saying that water, taken on top of fruit, would make me ill and that he had a little Alicante wine left. I accepted his offer, but scarcely was the wine in my stomach when I felt a heavy weight oppress my heart. Earth and sky whirled about my head and I would surely have fainted had not Lopez hastened to my aid. He restored me

me to dine at the Duchess d'Avila's and that the Duchess de Sidonia would be there too. He thought I seemed preoccupied and asked the reason for it. I was actually lost in day-dreams and I could not fix my thoughts on anything reasonable. Even at the duchesses' dinner I was sad; but so sparkling was their gaiety and so well did Toledo play up to them that before very long I, too, shared their happy mood.

During the dinner I noticed the duchesses and Toledo exchanging signs of intelligence and laughter that obviously had something to do with me. We left the table and instead of going into the salon, our *partie carrée* moved towards the duchess's private apartment. There Toledo locked the door and said to me:

"Illustrious Knight of Calatrava, kneel at the duchess's feet. She has been your wife for one whole year. Don't tell us you suspected it! The people to whom you will tell your story may perhaps guess it but the great art is to prevent suspicion from being aroused and that is what we have done. In truth, the mysteries of ambitious d'Avila have been very useful to us. He really had a son whom he expected to recognize. The son died and d'Avila made his daughter promise she would never marry in order that the fiefs would revert to the Sorriente, who are a branch of the d'Avila family. In her pride, our duchess vowed never to have a lord and master. But since our return from Malta that pride was somewhat shaken and in danger of being wrecked. Fortunately for the Duchess d'Avila, she has a friend, who is also your friend, my dear Avadoro. She confided in her and we came to an agreement. We then invented a Leonore, daughter of the duke and the Infanta, who was really the duchess herself, wearing a blonde wig and lightly made up. But you did not recognize your proud sovereign in the naïve boarder from the Carmelites. I attended several rehearsals of that rôle and I assure you I was just as deceived as you were.

"Seeing that you refused the most brilliant matches for the sole desire of remaining close to her, the duchess decided to marry you. You are married before God and the Church, but you are not married before men, or at least you would search in vain for proofs of your marriage. In this way the duchess has kept her promise to her father.

"You therefore married, and the result has been that the duchess was obliged to spend several months on her estates to avoid the glances of the curious. Busqueros had just arrived in Madrid. I told him where you were and, under the pretext of setting the ferret on the wrong trail, we sent Leonore off to the country. Then it suited us to have you leave for Naples, for we did not know what more to tell you about Leonore, and the duchess was unwilling to make herself known until a living token of your love would be added to your rights.

"At this point, my dear Avadoro, I ask you to forgive me. I plunged a dagger in your heart by announcing the death of a person who had never existed. But your sensitiveness was not wasted; the duchess is touched to see that you have loved her so completely under two such different guises. For one week she has been burning to declare herself. Here again I am to blame; I insisted upon making Leonore come back from the other world. The duchess was eager to be the white lady, but she was not the one who ran so lightly over the ridge on the neighboring roof. That Leonore was only a little chimney sweep.

"The same little fellow came back the following night, dressed as a lame devil. He sat on the window and slipped down into the street on a rope fastened there in advance. I don't know what happened in the patio of the Carmelite convent; but this morning I had you followed and I learned that you had made a lengthy confession. I dislike having anything to do with the Church and I fear the consequences of a jest that might be pushed too far. Therefore I ceased to oppose the duchess's desire and we decided to make the announcement today."

This, more or less, was the speech Toledo made. But I was not listening; I was kneeling at the duchess's feet. A charming flush suffused her face, in which I read complete surrender—her admission of defeat. My victory did not have—and never had—but two witnesses. It was none the less dear to me for that.

THE END

#### THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT

This book was first published in France, in 1958, by Librairie Gallimard under the title *Manuscrit Trouvé à Saragosse*. This first American edition was published in May, 1960. It was composed, printed and bound by The Haddon Craftsmen, Inc., of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and designed by Wladislaw Finne.

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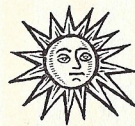
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**Tales Taken from Avadoro,  
a Spanish Story**



**Story of the Terrible Pilgrim Hervas,  
and of His Father, the Omniscient Infidel**

A profound knowledge of one hundred different branches of learning will seem, to some persons, to exceed the powers of which one human head is capable. It is certain, however, that Hervas wrote a book on each subject, beginning with its history and ending with extremely intelligent views on ways to increase and extend the frontiers of knowledge.

Hervas accomplished this colossal task by economizing his time and pursuing a regular schedule. He rose before sunup and prepared himself for his office work by mulling over the details he would have to attend to there. He appeared at the ministry half an hour before anyone else and, pen in hand, his mind empty of any thought other than the

"I am not Orlandine," said the monster in a terrible voice, "I am Beelzebub."

Thibaud tried to invoke the name of Jesus, but Satan, who guessed what he was about, seized the young man's throat in his teeth and prevented him from speaking the sacred name.

The next morning, some peasants on their way to the Lyons market to sell their vegetables, heard groans coming from an abandoned roadside hut that was used as a refuse-dump. They went in and found Thibaud lying on a half-rotted carcass. They took him up and laid him on top of their baskets, and thus they carried him home to the provost of Lyons . . . The unhappy La Jacquièrè recognized his son.

The young man was put to bed. In a little while he seemed to regain his senses to a certain extent and, in a feeble and almost unintelligible voice, he said:

"Let that holy hermit in, let that holy hermit in."

At first they did not understand him. At last they opened the door and they saw a venerable monk enter, who asked to be left alone with Thibaud. They obeyed him and closed the door on them. For a long time they could hear the hermit's exhortations, to which Thibaud replied in a loud voice:

"Yes, Father, I repent and I trust in divine mercy."

At last, when they heard nothing more, they thought they should go in. The hermit had disappeared and Thibaud was found dead with a crucifix in his hands.

I had no sooner finished that story than the cabalist came in; he searched my eyes as if to read what impression the story had made on me. To tell the truth, it had made a deep impression, but as I did not wish him to know that, I retired to my room. There, I thought over all that had happened to me and I almost came to the conclusion that demons had taken possession of the hanged men's bodies in order to trick me; in short, that I was a second La Jacquièrè.

The dinner gong sounded, but the cabalist did not appear. Everyone seemed to me to be preoccupied, no doubt because I was myself.

After dinner<sup>1</sup>, I went back to the terrace. The gypsies pitched their camp some distance from the castle. Of the inexplicable gypsy girls there was no sign. Night fell and I retired to my room. For a long time I waited for Rebecca. She did not come and at last I fell asleep.

END OF THE FIRST DECAMERON

<sup>1</sup> At this point in "Ten Days in the Life of Alfonso van Worden" there are two pages that serve to introduce directly the "Story of Rebecca," Days 12 and 13 having been carried over to "Avadoro." Day 11 does not appear in any of the Paris editions. Here is the text of those two pages:

After dinner, the young Israelite took me aside and said to me: "Alfonso, this morning you were watching the gypsies attentively as they danced at the foot of the terrace. Did you find in them a striking resemblance to anyone else?"

I begged her not to question me on this subject. She replied:  
"Estimable stranger, I see you never go back on your word. Happy the person who finds a confidant like you! Our secrets are of such a nature that they are known only to people who are not at all like you, but we need you. My brother begs you to go over to the gypsy camp and remain there a few days. He thinks you will get some information about the occurrences at the *venta*; they should interest you as much as him. Here are the keys of the gate at the foot of the terrace; it will let you out into the country road on the side where the gypsies have pitched their camp. Do not refuse to do us this service; watch the daughters of the gypsy chief and try to spread light on a mystery that troubles our people and may perhaps decide our fate. Ah! why can I not lead the life of the humblest mortal! I would have been better suited to that than these spheres to which I have been transported against my will."

After this speech, Rebecca withdrew. She seemed deeply moved. I dressed hastily, flung my cape over my shoulders, took my sword and, passing through the terrace gate, I walked out into the country towards the gypsies' tents.

From afar off I saw the leader; he was seated between two young girls, who looked to me something like my cousins, but the girls went back into the tent before I had time to get a good look at them. The old chief came towards me and said to me slyly:

"Do you realize, my lord, that you are in the midst of a band of people of whom much ill is spoken in this country? Are you not afraid of us?"

At the word "afraid" I put my hand on the hilt of my sword, but the gypsy held out his hand and said to me affectionately:

"Forgive me, my lord, I did not mean to offend you. Indeed, that is so far from my intention that I beg you to spend several days with us. Come into my tent; it shall be yours as the best we have to offer."

I accepted at once and he presented his two daughters but, to my great surprise, I saw not the slightest resemblance to my cousins.

We walked around the camp until someone came to tell us supper was served. The table had been laid under a tree with thick foliage, the food was good, especially as to game, the wine delicious and, seeing that the chief was in the mood for talking, I expressed a desire to know more about him. He did not hesitate to tell me his story. That man was named Avadaro, and the first part of his adventures has already been given to the public.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Four volumes pub. by Gide fils, 20 rue Saint-Marc. (Note in the 1814 edition).

## Part two

### The eleventh day

I was awakened by Rebecca. When I opened my eyes, the gentle Israelite was already seated on my bed and was holding one of my hands.

"My good Alfonso," she said to me, "yesterday you tried to come upon the two gypsy girls unawares, but the river-gate was locked. I have brought you the key. If they approach the castle today, I beg you to follow them, even into their camp. I assure you my brother will be very pleased if you can give him some information about them. As for me," she added in a melancholy tone, "I must depart. My fate wills it thus, my strange fate. Ah! Why did not my father leave me to a common destiny! I would have known love in reality and not in a mirror."

top of their lungs. They were dressed like Orientals: with turbans on their heads, chests and arms bare and costly weapons at their belt.

The two strangers, whom I took for Turks, rose, fetched a chair for me, filled my plate and my glass and then began to sing again, accompanying themselves on a theorbo, which they took turns playing. Their free and easy manner was contagious. They did not stand on ceremony. Nor did I. I was hungry; I ate. There was no water, so I drank wine. I wanted to sing with the young Turks who appeared charmed to listen to me. I sang a Spanish *seguidilla*. They replied in the same rhymes. I asked where they had learned Spanish.

One of them replied:

"We were born in Morea and, sailors by profession, it was easy for us to learn the language of the ports we frequented. But that's enough of *seguidillas*. Now listen to the songs of our country."

Their songs had a melody that played on all the nuances of emotion, and just when you were strung up to an unbearable pitch, an unexpected note flung you into the maddest gaiety.

I was not deceived by all those wiles. I stared attentively at the pretended sailors and I thought I found in one or the other a striking resemblance to my divine Gemini.

"You are Turks," I asked, "born in Morea?"

"Not at all," replied the one who had not yet spoken. "We are Greeks, born in Sparta. Ah! Divine Rebecca, how can you fail to recognize me? I am Pollux and this is my brother!"

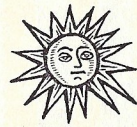
Fright robbed me of the use of my voice; the pretended Gemini spread their wings and I felt myself rise in the air. Through a happy inspiration I pronounced a sacred name known only to my brother and me. Instantly, I was hurled down to earth and lay there completely dazed by my fall. You, Alfonso, restored me to consciousness. An inner feeling tells me I have lost nothing that is important for me to preserve, but I am weary of so many wonders; I feel that I was born to remain a simple mortal.

Rebecca's story did not have the effect on me she intended.

In spite of the extraordinary things I had seen and heard during the past ten days, I thought she had tried to make a fool of me and I left her rather abruptly. Reflecting on what had happened to me since my departure from Cadiz, I then recalled several words of Don Emmanuel de Sa, governor of that city, that made me think he was not wholly stranger to the mysterious existence of the Gomélez. It was he who had given me my two servants, Lopez and Moschito. I got it into my head that he had ordered them to leave me at the disastrous entrance to Los Hermanos. My cousins, and Rebecca herself, had frequently said they wanted to test me. Perhaps at the *venta* they had given me a potion to put me to sleep and afterwards nothing could be simpler than to carry me during my sleep and put me under the fatal gallows. Pascheco could have lost an eye in quite a different accident than his amorous liaison with the two hanged men, and his ghastly story could be nothing but a tale. The hermit who had tried to discover my secret was undoubtedly an agent of the Gomélez seeking to test my discretion. And finally Rebecca, her brother, Zoto and the chief of the gypsies had all perhaps connived to shake my courage.

The result of those reflections, as one may readily surmise, was that I decided to await resolutely the sequel to the adventures to which I was destined and which the reader will learn if he has enjoyed the first part of this story.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By the first part of this story, we must obviously understand here the *Ten Days of Alfonso van Worden*—in other words, Days 1 to 10 and Day 14 of the complete work.



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task of the moment, he waited for the office to open. The moment the hour struck, he began his calculations and expedited them with surprising speed. After that, he went to the bookseller Moreno, whose confidence he had won, took the books he needed and carried them home with him. He went out again to eat a light meal, returned home before one o'clock and worked until eight o'clock at night. After that, he played *pelota* with several small boys in the neighborhood, returned home, drank a cup of chocolate and went to bed. On Sundays he spent the whole day away from home meditating on his work for the following week. In this way Hervas managed to devote three thousand hours a year to compiling his encyclopedic work. At the end of fifteen years (forty-five thousand hours) that amazing composition was actually completed without anyone in Madrid being aware of it; for Hervas was the least communicative of souls. He never spoke to anyone of his work, preferring to astonish the world by presenting all that vast accumulation of knowledge at one time.

Hervas therefore finished his work just as he himself came to the end of his thirty-ninth year, and he congratulated himself on entering his fortieth with a great reputation all ready to burst forth. But at the same time, in his heart he felt sad; for the habit of work, sustained by hope, had been to him a pleasant companionship that filled every moment of his day. He had lost that companionship; and boredom, which he had never known, began to make itself felt. That situation, so new to Hervas, changed his temperament completely. Far from seeking solitude, he was now seen in all the public places, where he always looked as if he were about to greet everyone; but as he did not know anyone and was unused to conversing, he passed by without a word. To himself, however, he thought that soon all Madrid would know him, would seek him out, and that his name would be on everyone's lips.

Tormented by his need for distraction, Hervas hit upon the idea of visiting his birthplace again, that straggling little village he hoped to make famous. For fifteen years the only relaxation he had permitted himself was to play *pelota* with the boys of the neighborhood, and he looked

forward with delight to the pleasure of playing the game in the place where he had spent his childhood.

Before he left, Hervas wanted to see his one hundred volumes ranged on a single shelf. He gave his manuscripts to a bookbinder, impressing upon him that the back of each volume must bear the name of the science and the number of the volume—from the first, which was the World Grammar, to the Compendium, which was the one-hundredth volume. At the end of three weeks the binder brought back the completed work. Hervas placed that imposing series on the bookshelf he had made ready for them and made a bonfire of all his notes and incomplete copies. Then, double-locking his door and putting his seal on it, he set out for Asturias.

The sight of his birthplace gave Hervas all the pleasure he had anticipated. A thousand memories, innocent and sweet, assailed him and he wept tears of joy that twenty years of the most arid conceptions had, so to speak, dried up at the source. Our polygraph would have gladly spent the rest of his days in his native village; but the hundred volumes called him back to Madrid.

So back he goes to the capital again, comes home, finds the seal on the door untouched. He opens the door! . . . and sees the hundred volumes in a thousand pieces, bindings ripped off, pages scattered in wild disorder all over the floor! That terrible sight drove him out of his mind; he collapsed amid the débris of his books and lost consciousness.

Alas! This was the cause of that disaster. Hervas never ate at home. Rats, so numerous in every house in Madrid, took good care not to frequent his place, where they would have found nothing but a few pens to nibble on. It was a different matter, however, when one hundred volumes, smelling of fresh glue, were brought into the bedroom, the very day that room was deserted by its owner. Attracted by the smell of the glue, encouraged by the emptiness of the place, the rats gathered in hordes. They turned everything topsy-turvy, they gnawed, they devoured . . .

When he recovered consciousness, Hervas saw one of those monsters dragging the last pages of his Compendium into a hole. It is doubtful if Hervas had ever known anger, but





**The Saragossa Manuscript**

# The Saragossa Manuscript

Count Jan Potocki

A COLLECTION OF WEIRD TALES

Edited and with Preface by Roger Caillois

Translated from the French by

Elisabeth Abbott

The Orion Press

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