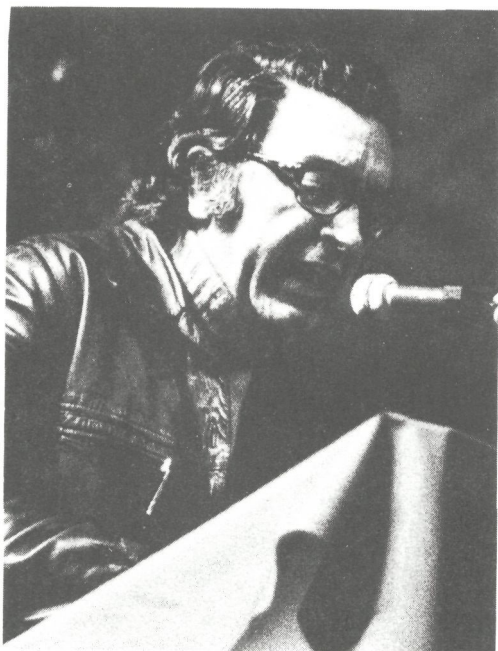


LETURIA



JOSE LUIS ALVAREZ EMPARANTZA «TXILLARDEGI»

Leturiaren Egunkari Izkutua - Leturia's Secret Diary

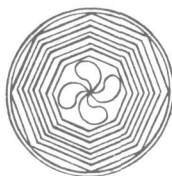
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BASQUE TRANSLATION SERIES

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The Editors

LETURIA

BY
JOSE LUIS ALVAREZ EMPARANTZA
(«TXILLARDEGI»)

Translated by Maddi Alvarez Forcada

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INTRODUCTION

*The novel **Leturia's Secret Diary** supposed a great qualitative change for the Basque literature, especially in matters of themes.*

Up to the Civil War, the Basque literature had been reduced to a conservative view of the customs and manners the rural society, the Basque language had never been the vehicle for such levels of conflict as those presented in this book.

*«**Leturia**», highly symbolic, poses the metaphysical problem of a man who becomes conscious of the genesis of his own absolutes. Thus, it touched a universal anxiety which had been left aside the predominant folklore programmes of the time.*

*«**Leturia**» has been published 4 times in its original version.*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

Practically all the verbs in the original were in the past perfect and have been changed in the translation. This would explain its presence, perhaps somewhat anomalous on first reading of certain chapters, and I give you the opportunity to restore it where I have been over-zealous.

I must also point out that some words are «home-made» by the author («bodiness», «aloneness»...)

Besides, I have tried to preserve the author's perception of the world by maintaining such combinations like «blinding noise» and others, even though they are quite «uncomfortable».

Finally, here are some notes on the text. I think they are useful in some cases and necessary in others.

— The name of the park «Zerubide» literally means «Way to Heaven».

- «If I was anything before I was married, after marriage...» (p. 6, chap I) is the beginning of a Basque popular song which says we are nothing after marriage.
- «Gipuzkoa»: one of the seven Basque provinces.
- «Amona manta gorri, gorri, gorri, gorri...» (p 41, chp XXI) Child song about the ladybird, in Basque «amona manta gorri» which literally means «The grandmother with the red cover».

SPRING

I

I'm alone in «Zerubide».

Don't pity me, I've come to be alone. And I feel great, really!

It's true, I'm alone but I much prefer to be enjoying little by little the greatness and beauty of the universe instead of wasting my time surrounded by people.

What does it mean to be alone? Though I've been surrounded by many friends, wasn't I actually much more lonesome and abandoned than I am now? Yes, I was, and often.

That's why I said at the beginning that today I am purposely alone; because even in the company of my friends I was alone, and furthermore, forced to it.

None of that today. I've come to Zerubide precisely to be alone, and I'm happy in my solitude. Is it possible to obtain anything without nourishing it with solitude?

This Zerubide is very pretty, like all parks. I don't know whether Zerubide is pretty, or what Zerubide itself is not, its «parkdom». This is not very important, only that it is beautiful.

In this wood, immersed in comforting shade, it seems I'm about to enter a marvellous new world. Its poetry moves me.

Now, for example, I'm sitting on a bench, there's a small round fountain in front of me, my only friend. Don't imagine it's a fine piece of workmanship: it's a very humble fountain, the kind I like: painted green by the moss, nothing more than the ceaseless little spurt. The tiny drops are also there, leaping, breaking the mirror of the water; and the light leaves which are swimming in it are pushed up and down as if they felt chilly.

Wonderful afternoon today. A clear sky above my head, moving shadows on the floor, a cool breeze to breathe, and the perfume of the flowers... it's good.

Spring is wonderful!

I'm alone, yes, and it's nice. Can a man say he is depressed when there is a patch of grass right before him?

They say it is hard to accept being compelled to be alone. And, yet, we feel happy alone. Why? What is it that makes us avoid aloneness? And, again, what pushes us to it at times? The urge to an internal dialogue, our desire to have a wordless conversation with ourselves.

In a word, I seek aloneness in order to wash out my mind, for it really is a washing out, and a true confession.

On the other hand, when I want to fool myself, no confession is possible, and I don't feel like being alone. It's fear, then, fear of myself that makes me avoid aloneness.

Now I feel no such fear. I'm disgusted by the world's sleep, its senselessness has disgusted me. I want to find myself, even if it hurts me, to study and examine carefully what I am.

And as nobody knows me or understands me, I shall write down all my discoveries in this Diary so as to be able later to retrace the path I have managed to make myself, like today. This Diary will be, then, the sack of all my worries.

All these events are sort of little nothings. But by writing down these very little things I feel much lighter than ever.

There's also a country house before me. Why does the sight of it move me so deeply? The redness of its roof and the whiteness of its walls remind me of something beautiful.

But that's not what affects me: its peacefulness disturbs me. Tranquility flows from the thingdom of the little house; nothing changes in it, it remains so and can remain so. For it, there's nothing to worry about, it watches quietly and impassively as the sun strolls, falls westwards, in the clear blue... It has no heart! That's why restlessness can't catch it! I however do have one.

The sun is slowly going to the west in this beautiful afternoon; this is the reason for my heart's distress!

Another day has passed, almost unnoticed, noiselessly, no murmur has been heard.

And even today, with such beauty glowing in everything, I have felt not a trace of happiness, only its lack, its absence. Not even the first step on the way to happiness!

Aren't these lines anything but the echo of a heart rending cry?

Yes, I'm eager for happiness; it's the secret reason for my being alone, the voice which has told me to escape from my friends. Nothing more than this: want of happiness is the beautiful flower from which my empty-heartedness has sprung.

Sometimes I envy those who don't care. How peacefully they live!

But... Did I say envy? Why? Happiness must be a great thing if we feel its want so deeply. Isn't this emptiness, in itself, intrinsically valuable? Doesn't it at least prove something? (And if it doesn't...)

Or do I seek happiness because my wounded heart needs happiness? Why else would my yearnings destroy my will to live unless there were hope of them coming true?

(And if they weren't...)

I understand very well; the murmurings of the trees and the meadows are the echo of the language of my heart: they say I am born for happiness, and not until

now, until coming here alone leaving the foolish and needless amusements of the world being have I realised this.

With the noise of the city, I couldn't hear the silent call of my heart. I was deaf!

Now, however, the murmur of the fountain, and the strange and changing movements of the trees make me hear clearly the weak voice of my heart.

Yes, I need happiness. The incomprehensible roar of the city hasn't satisfied me. Now, hearing it from afar, I realize it is ugly and false.

I'm alone, but in my world. Din is not for me: Zeru-bide is, if any exists, my way to salvation.

From now on, I shall come here, and everytime I come I shall bring my notes with me. From now on, these will be the best and most faithful friends of my heart. I shall share my sorrow with them.

And having written this, I'm going to watch from the hill as the afternoon dies. How marvellous! And how sad! How wonderful!

I look towards the sea. who could describe it? I walk towards the hill, quietly, slowly, there's no hurry. Why hurry? The sun doesn't. Nor do the trees in bloom.

I don't want my haste to make me fail. If there is any repose for me, isn't this it?

I'm following the path, breathing the damp smell of the brambles and the blossoms reborn...

II

This afternoon I'm in Zerubide again, and alone.

In case I get bored, I've brought a book with me. I've begun to read but I can't feel it: the famous author I shan't mention must forgive me, it's not his fault, but I can't concentrate on it. The birds' song, two kids running about holding hands, my head going right and left, I've given up reading.

I'd rather look at the park, and try to change my nervousness into words.

The weather is fine today: the atmosphere is heavy, sultry, but wonderful in the shade. Among the oaks, the sky. The leaves of the trees seem black and where yesterday they were moving continuously, today they are completely still. The wind's breath invigorates my face now and again; the tops of the trees swing lazily with pleasure.

The sky is not as clear as yesterday, and the misty clouds are dressed in blue, the distant mountains and hills are flat, no sign of prominences or peaks.

And once the sunny spots have gone, when through the clouds the sunshine becomes pale, all the beings become ordinary again; it seems the loss of light has stripped them. The outlines of the trees and the branches become dead beings as if swallowed up with the desolation of the sun. They are shapeless, mounds, like in Gauguin's paintings.

Thus, their strength lost, they remain in the darkness without knowing what to live for.

The park is dressed in purple black, the red flowers turn violet, and the thrill of a cry emanates from everywhere.

Meanwhile, as if to reinforce the weeping sensation suggested by the colour of the trees, a soft melody winds among the trunks... It's the dance band which from time to time plays modern songs and melodies.

The party can't be very far off, I heard the happy greetings and the good wishes normally given to the newlyweds about an hour ago. They must have left by now.

The guests are probably dancing in the colourful restaurant. The same old melody, the same old party, and as moving as always.

Have those two found their path? Found... Chosen at least, they have chosen. They have lost their freedom, but they won't have any love worries in the future.

Moreover, if they love each other, isn't paradise open to them?

But... A deep and sharp anguish possesses me. What do I know about all this? Illusion, mesmerisation! Isn't what I feel at their sight a simple illusion of happiness?

Life has two facets, two sides, two moments for them: the first one from their childhood up to now, and the other from now on. They have left the first one behind.

Actually, isn't marriage in itself part of the end? Isn't man climbing upwards until that moment, tumbling down towards darkness after that? Doesn't man become smaller by getting married? If I was anything before I was married, after marriage...

Looking forward, another life appears to the newly-weds. But if the days preceding the marriage were a dream, the days following it bring hardening and settlement, and isn't the fulfilment of our dreams much darker than we had expected?

Their future is wonderful: a different life, completely unknown, decadent perhaps.

Who knows?

They have lived their honeymoon. Looking for the fullness of youth, they have killed their youthful days. It's a high price, indeed, but the essence of man lies in his making this choice. And I'm afraid to choose. It's painful. They won't feel this uneasiness in the future; but, instead, the idea that have already made their choice will follow them all their lives. Any regret?

This day of May will be unforgettable for them because they have put a limit and a direction to their lives. Never again will they see anything as they used to see it, marriage has changed the world for them. The pretty flower of aloneness which spoke to their hearts yesterday has now found a new companion.

The twilight has lost the fantasy appearance it had until yesterday. The language of their youth will be stilled forever. Not even their dreams of yesterday will come back.

What can this little fountain of Zerubide tell a married person? Not the same thing as it does to me at least.

What is the language flowers have with married people?

From birth to marriage, and from marriage to death: these are the two stages of life: before the choice, after the choice.

For the present, everything becomes a lightening in me. I'm living the first period. I don't know who to love, nobody loves me, only my parents do; I don't know where to go... Isn't this life of restlessness more tiring than that of those daring newlyweds?

As I am writing this, a young girl has come over to the fountain. She has looked at the changing mirror of the water for a while; I can't say if she was looking at herself or studying the stony rim of the fountain; she looked as if she were dreaming...

She has stood there until a big dog has come up to her barking; probably her dog, begging for a stone to run after. The girl is suddenly woken up from her dream, and she has left with the beautiful dog. She has told him not to disturb me, and as she was going away she has excused herself with a look. Nothing strange about it: it's not very usual to find a young man writing in the park; it seems she has thought the same thing.

And she's left me alone again, like before, like yesterday, the trees and the birds are my only companions...

The sun has flickered out behind the clouds. The afternoon is getting darker and darker, and because of this I don't feel like going on with this.

The trumpet has been playing high notes the whole afternoon. Now, however, I can't hear anything. The noisy wedding party must have finished...

I feel I'm tired of writing, I'm sleepy.

III

It's still raining!

I was reading this morning, and I was happy.

I didn't like the idea of staying at home all the afternoon too, so I decided to go out.

I took my umbrella and I went to Zerubide.

I thought it would be beautiful under the rain. As soon as I reached the park, I went straight to «my» little corner, to the same fountain as the other days.

I couldn't hear anything, only the rain falling on the umbrella.

In the fountain, the small round undulations of the rain and those of the jet mingled with one another, and the water seemed to be boiling.

I stood there, my eyes fixed on the fountain, but without really seeing it, in silent conversation with myself.

With a damp kiss, a sudden cold wind gave life to the cold skin of my face, and my heart suddenly felt new emotions; but no sooner did this pleasant, this shred

of happiness brighten the depths of my being was I dragged back to the wet ground as if tied by the flesh of misfortune.

What palpitations! Compared to them, the most pleasurable thing is bitterness.

I would do anything to make those luminous sensations last longer. Whoever has never felt these penetrating and sweet bolts of pleasure can know nothing of happiness...

Zerubide was wonderful today. Yes, they are stupid; those who can't profoundly admire the loneliness of a wet park are really stupid. They are poor devils... or simple fools.

I wandered the paths, surrounded by the trees remembering Debussy's «Les jardins sous la pluie». It was the same.

Blessed are those who can experience the world of Beauty, those who worry about nothing but Beauty, those who have the possibility or the sufficient courage to live and die in Art.

When the wind blew, I couldn't help looking up. Is there any movement more exciting than the tossing to-and-fro of the trees? When the night is bright, their movement is a whisper; when it's dark, it is a moan. In the winter storm, it's a dire warning; in a windy autumn afternoon, a painful farewell.

While I was thinking about this, a big dog approached me. Was it the same as other day?

I looked everywhere, and... yes, it was. The young girl was in Zerubide again, and I couldn't guess why she was there this time either. Despite the bad weather, there she was with her loyal friend, walking about.

When I was beside her, I had a silly thought: must I greet her? I had no time to think, and I dropped a «Good afternoon» almost without realizing it.

She must have felt self-conscious, for it was clear she quickened her pace.

What was she doing? To tell the truth, she has me worried. I thought her pretty, very pretty. I don't even know what she was like, but in that dark and wet atmosphere she blossomed alive and colourful, I've never felt as sharply as today that sweet pink.

Perhaps because she was scared, her gaze looked tender, completely new to me. Are that girl from Zerubide's troubles the same as mine? If not why does she feel sad and empty too?

After the girl left, I walked towards the sea, towards the hills, and the rain stopped at that precise moment.

The distant steel clouds were blushing, and I stood there watching the vast ocean until the sun was snuffed out behind the horizon.

Tomorrow, we'll have good weather.

So be it!

IV

I can't say how long I've been waiting in Zerubide. Nothing. I wanted to see «her», her fresh image was fading inside me.

I was coming back home having lost hope of seeing her, and I met Xabin. It had been ages I last saw him, and we started talking. As we were walking I had a second surprise: «my» girl was coming down the street.

I broke off the conversation sharply, as if I had been struck, and I asked Xabin; —«Hey, Xabin, do you know that girl coming over there?»

Yes, he said he did.

I was all eyes, my greeting was short. I couldn't speak a word.

I looked at her with interest. I guzzled her beautiful face the same way the hundreds of climbers do water from the trickling fountain at the top of the mountain. She is more beautiful than I thought. I explored every detail of that face in a few seconds, and discovered an ugly mar: I don't like her teeth. How can it be? I don't know.

I considered thus for a bit, but I didn't want Miren to notice anything.

I liked her lips a lot, and most of all her timid eyes. The time she took to greet me was enough, I already had her portrait in my mind, and every detail had been carefully examined.

She began to speak and as soon as I heard her crystal voice, I was completely shaken. How was it that the stones didn't melt on hearing her? How could it be her gentle look didn't soften the rocks themselves?

She is seventeen. A lithe body, bright eyes, ivory white skin.

We decided to accompany her on her way home, and I told her everything in ten minutes. Joy made me chatter.

I know nothing of what poor Xabin said or did, but he wasn't with us when we arrived at her door.

I told Miren I didn't know where he had gone. I asked her to believe she was really extraordinary and that I wanted to get to know her, my heart in my mouth.

The moment to part came very quickly, and I asked her when I would see her again, but instead of giving me a straight-forward answer, she kedged. So, I can't say when we shall meet again.

It seemed like she didn't want to get in for we had been talking outside her house for a good while.

Oh, darling Miren! How bright is the darkest night after having seen you!

Later, I would gladly have begun to shout, to proclaim how wonderful love is. But why? What for? What does someone who has never been thirsty know about thirst?

Love: you're the most beautiful word in the dictionary, the sweetest voice of the heart, the strongest stimulant for the mind. Who can describe the wonders that appear to the lover?

I am loath to speak to anyone in order to preserve the echo of her voice; I want nothing in my aloneness but to dream. All the pleasures of the world are nothing to me.

Make her notice me, make her fix her eyes on me, make her feel I'm there, how can I make her...?

I have been thinking about this, and I've decided to give her this short letter as soon as possible:

«Miren

Why?

I don't know you, yet you're completely know to me.

I don't love you, but I want your happiness.

Why?

Your look has made me dream; and the mere thought of making you cry makes me tremble. Why you Miren?

Why?

I don't know when it will be possible to give it to her, but I've decided I shall.

How will she take it? When shall I give it to her?
what painful indecision!

It's been a sombre day today. The sun rose, and the sky was blue. But what is the sunshine to me if I can't see Miren?

Let the sun go down before it comes up, let it stop rising, let the stars fall from their quiet firmament; I don't care about anything when Miren's clear eyes are in front of mine, reassuring me.

Oh, how stupid I am!

I haven't seen her!! Why doesn't this break someone's heart?

But I hear: «Joxeba, your attitude is not a sensible one. You're going mad.» If man's duty is to live rightly and sensibly, let the demons carry me off.

What do I care about «sensible» and «right» if they have only made me drowsy up to now. If it enables me to feel the essence of life, then welcome madness!

What a change: I've never had anything to think about at night until now; as soon as I got into bed I fell asleep, under its cover, my heart's light would go out.

Now, however, as I go to bed, hundreds of ideas come to my mind, thousands of doubts afflict me, changing what was peace into a tempest. Ah, Miren, if I could see you tomorrow, if I could speak to you, if your voice could cheer me up... You are my only memory, my whole being is filled by you, and is tinted by all sorts of doubts. Sometimes you take me up to heaven,

and others down to the most terrible hell. You are simultaneously light and darkness to me.

And how poor and insufficient my fantasy is! From time to time, your magical image awakens me inside: but after a flicker of brightness, I sink to drown in darkness, blinder and unhappier than before.

God! And how insignificant my strength is compared to all I need!

If only I could dream at night. What do sight and all the conversations do in daytime but frustrate you?

I want to sleep, if only her cherished image were to adorn my rest...

But what is Miren's face like? I try to remember, and in the attempt, I realize I don't remember it very well. It seems incredible: the very memory which has illuminated and given shape to my life has no clear form in me.

If only I could dream today... Then, when the blinkers of righteousness have disappeared, the soul sees perfectly clearly and brightly what I can hardly perceive when the body is awake.

Will deep sleep never put out the weak light of consciousness!

V

Another day has passed, and what have I seen but black night? Yesterday, I could still hear your voice in my memory, even if it wasn't very clearly; and your thrilling look was quite fixed in my eyes.

I was going on like this because I had not seen Miren, therefore I decided to approach her house. I didn't know what it is to change streets until today. when I took a different route instead of going straight right so as to pass in front of her door, I discovered that I am in love.

The beat of my heart was getting quicker and stronger, and... I don't know how to say it. The most skillful writer would be clumsy and awkward at explaining the moment that disturbed me so much.

It was a very brief instant: the time one needs to cross the hall, not longer. I was walking but it was similar to a mortal wound. Miren was at the door, wonderful, more beautiful than the other day, leaning

against the wall, dressed in grey with a very red scarf round her neck.

Who can describe the tearing bite that quickened and mixed my blood? I was thunder struck. Truly, I don't understand: why doesn't she go out with other men?

There was my dear and precious Miren. Who is that young person who luck strikes so especially?

Has she got a boyfriend? I hereby swear that I shall take her from him, even if I have to tear the world apart.

How long did this killing sight last? A hundredth part of a minute? Eternity won't be long enough to take this beatifical sight away from my mind; not even ten suchlike.

It was fire which has shown the way, and nothing but the fire of my heart will put it out.

Who could have guessed this?

This unhappy sight has pushed me into the reign of doubt. Now doubts will eat me up.

VI

I hadn't seen Miren for nine days. As the time passed, emptiness grew, and there was no more space for my will to life, the worm of sadness was burrowing deeper and deeper.

I always took the letter I had written with me to give to Miren at any time; and today, when at last I had the pleasure of seeing her, my whole self trembled with happiness.

It was late and I only had the chance to walk her home. I am the only one who knows how I look at her, nobody else does. And if I were Homer himself, I would not make another feel a quarter of what I was feeling at that moment. How happy I was! The minutes were seconds to me; and I think the centuries were equally short. Only eternity could appease my dry fierce thirst. We reached her door too quickly. But it was time to go, and taking the letter from my pocket I gave it to her.

She refused to take it.

I didn't expect this; and as often happens with women, she won; and I, who had thought over every possibility, was left lost and helpless.

She has refused my letter. All my doubts and pains have been concentrated on this event for these last nine days.

I'm nervous, very nervous. where has my former peace gone?

VII

Yesterday, I was mean to Miren, very mean. My heart spoke to her, and I don't think I have ever slept so badly as I did yesterday; and for only five hours.

People say that an «intelligent» man doesn't back and doubt. I do behave thus. But who can say truthfully that he has nothing to regret? To aim to live avoiding future regrets would be simply haughtiness; and though people say they do, nobody lives this way. Who has behaved rightly always, constantly following reasonable rules? One has to be realistic to admit the weakness of man. And I do.

What will happen now? If I had thought it over, however...

But... I did; I knew this would happen, I'm sure. Yesterday, my words were too cruel in one way. Soon, I began to look for an excuse and to put forward any conciliatory words, but finally I believed there was nothing to be afraid of. I knew all this and the uneasiness and the doubt that would arouse; but I didn't listen to

reason carefully enough, and afterwards... the consequences.

I'm not self-possessed, and Miren is who has pushed me into this terrible abyss. The memory of the pleasure lasts longer than the pleasure itself. And what can I do after the image has vanished?

Nothing!

On the other hand, if I had been affectionate to her yesterday, I'd be peaceful now, with no worry, no fear.

This way, on the contrary...

But something tells me silently: «When have you been calm, man? You've always regretted the peace of the day before. Were you born to enjoy quietude?»

The tireless ghost of doubt is still running about, I can't fall asleep.

VIII

Miren is gone. To Izeta. To spend the summer.
She was my life. Literally: I'm dead.

IX

I can't say how it happened, but as I was examining my old papers and letters, I found a map of Gipuzkoa. As I picked it up, suddenly my eyes fell on the name «Izeta»; a thrill ran through me: «Izeta! Izeta! Izeta!... Miren lives in you. You can see her everyday, lucky you! Your streets and your surroundings are unknown to me; but how beautiful they must be...»

I explored every detail and every line of the map very slowly, carefully and lovingly. I couldn't believe that a simple cold map hid such richness; whoever hasn't known love can't understand this.

Beauty flowed from the name Izeta. Its melody was honey to me, and reading its letters one by one was a great pleasure.

X

This past day has been with no doubt the most memorable of my life; and I shan't soon forget it. Neither sooner nor later in fact.

Who could deny that I have been happier than ever and also more miserable than ever in the same day?

In the afternoon I sat down on a bench on my way to the beach. The weather was clear, and I watched the calm sea before me.

About two o'clock, as I was taking in the beauty of Altzurain, Miren appeared from my left. My heart jumped, overexcited.

What a surprise! Her image was fading inside me, and I found her more beautiful than the image I had stored away.

I stood up and approached her to welcome her.

I don't know what I said. She was pretty, or rather she was adorable; I told her this and many more things on the short way back.

I reached home ecstatic. Miren in Altzurain!

In the afternoon, I went to Zerubide, of course! But in vain.

I've been there for three hours, pretending to read (it was at the gate I was looking, not the book) and after completely losing heart, I left and I passed in front of her house as I do everyday.

All in vain.

I was completely discouraged when I got home last night.

But as I was unable to remain still, I went out again. For I thought it was assinine stupid to stay at home when this probably was the only day in which I could see Miren. As soon as I got out, I met my friends Joanes and Peru and we headed for the «Cannes Club».

And regretted it too.

We were going inside when I stopped for a moment: «Where is Miren? I'd give anything to be with her».

We got in... and there she was, dancing.

The light was dim and there was a red screen hanging from a corner. Miren's beloved figure stood out against it. It was the same young man as the other day... what a cruel blow!

At first, Miren didn't notice I was watching her. She did later, but she continued as before. I wanted to die!

I sat down with my friends. By then, I didn't know what I was doing any more, and my friends soon noticed that something was wrong with me. I was terribly ashamed: but my distress was much more acute and

deeper than any shame: it was the most terrible that had ever gripped my heart.

I fixed my eyes on Miren, daringly, like the helpless do, without moving a single muscle. Miren!

I don't think there is a nastier and crueller blow than this one.

Soon, they left the «Cannes». Together!

They went and I remained for a few minutes. I didn't want anybody to notice my sadness.

But outside, I saw they were about to leave on a motorcycle. I pretended not to see them, but it was no good. Miren was waiting for my greeting, I don't know why. With my heart shattered in pain, I said good-bye, barely glancing at her, and as brutally as I could.

I remember the whole scene as if I was watching it, and I believe it will be so for the rest of my life.

At home I didn't eat dinner. I couldn't. I went to bed immediately, and I would have buried myself if I had to. No tears, though.

I've been tossing and turning in bed, back and forth, sighing deeply, unable to sleep. I've pronounced her name hundreds of times against the pillow. This was the only thing that comforted me. «Miren... Miren!!! You love another man... What can I do without you? I love you, Miren, I love you. Why didn't I realize it before?»

Perhaps I did sleep a little until two o'clock in the morning. But from then on, not at all, I swear, not even a minute. How full of minutes is the night!

The morning has awakened smiling, and the weather will be fine.

Why? For whom?

The day has just begun and I'm tired already.

It will be a long day for me. Please, don't let it be as endless as the night.

XI

I can't live like this; I can't stand it any more.

It's not the best moment, I know, but I've decided to write to Miren. Oh, if only I could write down my warmth...

I've changed what I have written once and again. This has been my principle worry these days. I shall be brief so that she reads it. This is the letter:

«Miren:

The episode of the «Cannes» has been a blinding, a base and a terrible vision.

When, unexpectedly, I saw you there so happy, the blow to my heart was so painful that at first I didn't want to believe what my eyes, rivetted on you, had seen.

Slowly, sadness began to possess me, and still does.

After this, the night was long, very long, and very disturbing too: I've never lived such a night in all my life.

I love you, Miren. I can't understand it, but you're wounded my heart as thousands of arrows never could.

It would have been much better for me not to have known you!»

If only this would move her heart. If only she would pity me at least.

But if she loves «the other man», the letter will pass by leaving no trace, my warmth won't even touch her.

Pitiful me, indeed, if this happens.

Stop thinking about it; I shall post the letter, and we'll see. «Conscience makes cowards of all of us...»
Let's stop analysing.

XII

I'm home, watching through the window. I'm looking at the acacia in front of me though I don't see any acacia. My hands on my face, the wind lashes my cheeks as it blows through my fingers, and pervades my warm muffler with the smell of mist.

What wonderful weather! Everybody is pleased except myself. We have a clear afternoon, and there are a lot of people in the streets. The cars and the motorcycles scurry continuously below my window, they're all leaving to enjoy the clearing weather in the countryside.

A crowded summer afternoon...

I've breathed deeply and willingly: they are playing «Three coins» on the radio, and the melody reaches me mingled with the noise of the cars. Don't tell me it is mediocre: it might be; but at this moment it touches me as much as any symphony.

Over there, far away, I see part of the beach of Itzazpi through the trees. Further on, a bevy of colourful

small boats are sleeping on the water. No foam around their sides.

What a full afternoon!

Inside, on the contrary, I am empty. Or more accurately, full of sadness. And it is towards you, Miren, where my recollection goes inevitably.

Why are you physically and sentimentally so far away from me?

The days are passing and I still can't know how you have reacted to my letter. I don't even know whether you have received it or not.

I have no other recollection but that of your last glance, with the exception of the episode of the «Cannes».

You can't love him. God! You can't.

XIII

How long is it since I last wrote here, since those miserable days... How many empty days... How many cruel blows... Nobody but I knows this.

The warmth and the quiet ocean of August have gone, and how slowly.

Now, we're in Septembre. These days are bright, short, ideal for scanning sun and sky; days of dreamy afternoons... Night falls earlier, and it is usually cold in the evening.

September: the most wonderful month.

The holidaymakers have started to leave. They don't like the cold, and Alzurain is becoming its old self. And it makes me happy.

Happy because the summer is almost finished.

But before going on, what have I done all this time? I don't know. I've been with my friends, I've been alone (more frequently than with my friends) and making up things to do. Inventing yes. I've been reading all the time,

and I don't regret it; for thanks to this I have forgotten Miren a little during these last two months.

This afternoon, as I do quite often, I took a book under my arm and I went out. I was reading and sitting on a bench near Itzazpi and as I was returning to town, I saw Miren walking towards me! She was alone, very pretty, as pretty as in the dreams I had abandoned a little.

My heart beat strongly but in a way I didn't expect: it was much softer, as if the fire of times past had gone out.

—Welcome, Miren! It's a long time since I last saw you!

As I said that, I suddenly remembered the letter... my old letter! Shame almost made me lose my balance and I regretted having sent it.

Up to a certain point, however, I behaved more naturally than ever today, and I'm astonished because I never expected anything like this. I returned to Itzazpi with her, and the words came easily. We talked about myself, or rather: I talked about everything. And very naturally actually, without nerves.

There was nobody at Itzazpi, only the usual children playing in the sand.

It was a warm day, but little by little some white clouds were covering the blue sky. We decided to return to Altzurain, just in case.

As soon as we had decided, the distant roar of thunder shook the sky and we hurried our pace.

It is two kilometres from Itzaspi to the centre of Alzurain, and the downpour caught us on the way. Hidden under an overhanging roof, we stayed there waiting for the rain to stop.

I won't easily forget that wait. why? Nothing and everything. The cloudburst was too short though it lasted quite long; and the lightnings were few even if they were numerous. They made the wait exciting.

The rain stopped at last and I was happy breathing the steam that rose from the wet ground. The dampness scattered hundreds of scents everywhere, and the houses and the trees were shining with amazing colours. The sky turned to yellow and the trees were shining with amazing colours. The sky turned to yellow and purple, and the town put on its wonderful evening dress.

Soon the lights were on and the performance was incredible when the mist began to rise slowly from behind the lights.

After the rain, then, we went towards Miren's house; but instead of going straight there we wandered the streets. And even when we reached her door, she didn't hurry to go in. How could this be?

I almost asked her about «the other man» when we arrived but I didn't. And I'm glad I didn't. Why ask? I prefer this cautious and smooth feeling to the cruel truth.

Now, I feel like I've been dreaming. Was she really with me?

I'm full of questions. Oh, miserable me! I'm full of doubts again.

I don't understand it: I'm colder than ever. After such a long period without seeing her, I would have believed I would eat her up, but no. What has happened to my heart?

Miren! You're born again in me. Will it be in such bad luck as last time? And really, though I can't explain it, I know something has changed.

What's happening to you, Miren?

XIV

I haven't been to the beach. The weather was grey and cold, and instead of going to Itzaspi, I finished some things that had to be done.

Suddenly, as I was thinking about these things, I came across Miren. I went shopping with her, and finally, having done the errands, I stayed with her.

Today wasn't she anxious to go home either and as there was plenty of time until lunch, we took the road to Txinartza without knowing where we were going.

How amazing! After Txinartza, we' reached Munoa. We sat down on a stone seat and we were talking peacefully. I was in heaven.

When we were coming back from Munoa, the conversation turned on the afternoon, and Miren was daringly pushing me, so before the subject changed, I asked her:

—If we are alone, why don't we go to watch the film you mentioned this afternoon? I haven't seen it either, and I am as willing as you to go, people say it's very good.

The more I thought about this invitation, the less I understood our attitude. Mine because I dared, hers because she didn't refuse. I understand nothing of what has happened today, and I can't mention here the explanation that comes now and again to my mind. No!!! It's impossible.

I was so happy! But the film was too late for me. There were still four hours left: What an endless wait...

I had lunch but I wasn't at all there and had no appetite. I don't want to eat. why eat? I didn't need to eat, I needed to age; to age four hours.

What could I do to make time go faster?

I went out and walked calmly, precisely because I was nervous, and I'll never forget I saw Sorrarain first and Kalparsoro later.

I headed for Zugaztieta not knowing how to spend the remaining time.

It was low tide and the smell of salt-peter was very penetrating. I breathed deeply and stood there for a while, watching the waves breaking on the beach. Later, at ten to six, I walked towards Miren's house.

She arrived looking very pretty.

We went to the cinema, and how happy I was with Miren... Perhaps I didn't catch the real meaning of the film, but actually, I found it much poorer than I had been told. Besides what do I care about the film if I could see in the darkness the face which I had dreamed of so many times? I saw half her face, her profile, but God knows how

her eyes, so close to mine, attracted me. She sat leaning towards me: I feel ashamed when I admit it, but she almost had her head on my shoulder.

She surprised me, sometimes, looking at her in that darkness; but she pretended not to notice and she let me watch her. What is all this?

Then, after leaving the cinema, we walked slowly towards the sea to enjoy the cool wind and, finally, we went home.

How could I have guessed what happened then? I dropped a «See you tomorrow» when we parted, and her answer was a cruel surprise:

No, Joxeba, I'm sorry but I can't. I'm leaving for six days»; she went on, «see you then».

Her news has wounded my heart.

But I've been happy today, with Miren!!! Can I believe it...?

It's no good: I'm only pleased, probably because of her last comment. But let's not start cursing...

She's leaving again: that's the problem. when shall I have her with me and for me, lovable everyday, being my source of happiness?

And what am I in the world without you? An orphan!

XV

I'm watching a fragile blade of grass in front of me, seemingly nervous, unable to remain still in the wind. Who is it greeting with so many reverences?

I'm lying in a meadow near Bolueta. I've come riding my bicycle: it's easy to cover four kilometres in this way.

This place is wonderful: peaceful and smiling. I like everything: the old farms in the mountains, the paths, the yellow corn, the reddish hills. An oxherd has greeted me a moment ago and his «Gee-ups» have vanished with him as he went uphill on his cart. The creek «Ekai» is in front of me, crossing the fields quietly, and the small old stone bridge is still there.

I've come here very often to nurse my sadness, and there's no more comforting place than this, believe me.

When will Miren receive my regards? I saw her friend Maite before and she told me she was going to Izeta; I immediately asked her to send my kindest regards and a wave of happiness has shaken me strongly. I was with a

person who would be talking with Miren later! This simple event has really touched me.

My blade of grass is still there, silent in the wind, swinging smoothly. Tender, fragile, handsome...

It's very much like my heart.

XVI

I ran into Kepa.

We had a lot of drinks together.

—I need to forget, Kepa— I've said provoking him.

—Do you really have anything to forget?

—Yes, sir... and a lot, even if it is only one thing.

I regretted it afterwards.

—You know her: Miren.

«What do you see in her?» Or what he asked later: «What do you like about her?» as if he meant «Which part?».

And those who reply «her eyes» for example know nothing about love. They're many? Maybe. But they don't know anything about this. For, how can you know why you love? Everything in her is light and pleasure, otherwise there's no love.

«What do you see, Joxeba?». I still hear that foolish man. There's nothing «to be seen» in Miren. See, see... Definitely, we feel in body and soul, with our whole self, without a «part» we like especially. The instincts have

their location. However, the sentiment belongs to the soul, and its very essence doesn't allow any location.

Why did I give him all these explanations? We were in two different worlds.

Words have different meanings for him and me. No, not because the sense is different to us as it happens in matters of reason, but because we've lived different lives.

Maybe the word «love» has another dimension in him; but besides this, and here lies the problem, the word has a different value for him.

How could the story be understood otherwise? The same things have happened to one and to the other. How is it possible to explain, then, that one goes one way and the other goes the other? Because one of them makes light of a fact while the other one gives it all the importance. why? We don't know this.

A similar thing happens with love. What does Tom see in a girl that Harry doesn't? Nothing of course. Both have eyes. However, if one puts some grounds to what he sees, the other doesn't.

Value: a word which is very easily used.

And we stopped the conversation. what for? Light never breaks on discussions. Both sides use their minds and senses to expose any sort of proof and explanation. How is it possible, being one only truth, to reach that truth? Because excepting Mathematics, there's no reasonable discussion. Discussions on value have nothing to do

with man. We all always go somewhere to prove something; we use our heart much more than our head.

Besides, even using reason, very little can be proved in this world. Things are too complicated. We could even say more: when something comes to be proved, the contrary can also be proved. And this is due to the essence of humans. The terrible mix-up of man comes precisely from this mix-up which will never be solved... «Because we don't see what we're looking at?

Each one sustains whatever he likes.

What was I going to tell Kepa, then? Nothing. Perhaps I had to prove that Miren is wonderful? Could I prove such a thing? Those who «prove truths» make me laugh. Poor things!

I love Miren, that's all. I don't see any other problem. I love her because I want to (is it because I want to? Not even because of this).

I don't know anything.

And if I myself don't know, what could I have said to Kepa, to win his approval?

Nothing of course.

We were in two worlds: my effort would have been useless.

This is why, as long as the world exists, lovers will be laughed at.

No doubt. And there's no solution to this.

XVII

I've had a nice idea today, always related to the same thing: I want to send a present to «her» house. But immediately, the doubts have rushed in: I had to find a better time, she may not like the idea... I stopped the interrogations, and I decided to go through with it.

However, there was something in my decision which upset me: its commonness. Why was I behaving like all the other lovers or pseudo-lovers? I'm sure that most of the couples we see here and there know love only superficially; I know perfectly well that they don't know what the love-thrill is. You only have to look to realize what I'm talking about: physical attraction is their principal motivation.

Though I am different, Am I going to be have like them inevitably? If so, it will be a sad job. How could I make her see this is not so? That this is a poignant worry for me, that the agony consuming my insides is totally different...

Making a present, however, doesn't show novelty in my attitude. I would be doing the usual thing...

And even if I said to her «I love you», is there anything new about that? What makes up the poignancy of these words? What is different in them? I would be saying the same thing that has been said in every old song, in every country for generations and generations; an unconscious lie most of the time. What to me is life itself has been turned into the commonest thing. Disgusting!

My love for Miren is a true love, believe me. But considering it from the outside...

I was about to give up for a moment.

I've started to search in the shops. All the presents and the decorative objects to be given were insufficient for me: above all, they were very cold: they would not fit as messengers of my heart.

I never imagined that choosing a present was so difficult. I spent hours going from one street to the other, and I had terrible doubts.

Finally, I made up my mind, put it in a small box and after writing Miren's address on it, sent it by post. Inside, the words «with all my heart. Joxeba» on a card.

She'll receive it tomorrow or the day after.

I feel much calmer now, and glad because she'll get the present very soon. Will she like it?!

I feel like I've been with her.

XVIII

Miren is coming back tomorrow: I can't help thinking about this. She will be here tomorrow; and her holidays have finished this time.

I'm at the gate of happiness; «the day before the wedding». Is there anything more delightful? The day I was waiting for so intensely has arrived. And as I wanted it: bright, flowing liveliness.

A small cloud appears up there. Is it moving? It doesn't seem to but I keep my eyes on it for a moment and it is, very slowly, as if all the worries of this world didn't concern it: «Respectable cloud: can you see Miren's expression from there?»

She arrives tomorrow.

I've been to the fountain of Zerubide. When shall I see «Pintto» there, as I did in that strange first day? «Pintto» himself is luckier than I am, he is spending the summer in Izeta to.

I sat on the same bench as that day, and I looked at the fountain. I was trying to live it once more through

memory. How did it happen? I met the person who would completely change my life by chance, I met the person who would give substance to my life by accident. Pardon? And if I had not met her?

If I had gone somewhere else instead of going there? Or, if Miren had been at a different place because she had something else to do?

I trembled. We met unexpectedly. How sad this though has made me!

Today, however, I didn't want to be sad, and I've thrown away all such recollections. And I've taken Miren's arrival back to my mind.

Everything remained the same: the spurt of water was still flowing, the image of the trees was constantly being reflected, the fallen leaves were swimming tirelessly in the water. The warbling, the soft murmur of the water, and the weak distant echos were its music. Nothing but peace and steadiness.

Everything reminds me of a joyful arrival: even the branches, swinging as if they were anxious seem to be fighting to see Miren.

Everything is smiling. Don't you notice it in that stirring branch?

XIX

It was drizzling this morning: melancholy has taken over Altzurain; everything, except me. Then it stopped and everything was calm and cloudy. Even the progression of time seemed to have stopped, and this has made the morning longer to me.

I shall hardly forget this day: Septiembre the sixteenth. Even if I wrote it in gold letters, it would be meagre and scarce.

In the future... let's slow down.

She saw me and «you're crazy»: these are the words she used to welcome me. She must have liked the ring for she had it on her finger when we've met. I considered this a good sign, and I wasn't wrong.

We walked to Zerubide. Everything was soaking wet. The branches dripping, the flowers as if they were weeping, running over the gardens. Nobody was there. Peacefulness embued everything.

We approached «my» fountain, and everything was the same as always, but painted a different shade. I've never found Zerubide as poetical as today.

Miren and I have stopped at the fountain, and I reminded her of our first encounter. It wasn't necessary: she did remember it.

There we were, looking at the jet when I took her cold hand in mine. I looked at the ring tenderly and smiling. She said nothing. Silence appeared between us, but I didn't feel it heavy, neither did she, I think. How pleasant it was to warm her hand! Nothing is sweeter.

At that moment, her eyes wondered at mine, and mine hers perhaps. Everything has become pure brightness since: emerald the grass, silver the water, fire the evening sky. What was that?

I think the opening of heaven is the same.

Winds of pleasure overwhelmed me by and turns and I completely lost my balance. My overexcited blood seemed to try to escape from my veins. This kiss was sidelong, celestial, and eternal even if it was short.

Now, in the peaceful loneliness of my room, I put my lips against the mirror in vain. I've burnt myself for ever: the cold of the mirror is too little to cure my pain. My flesh is seared, and it will be all my life, the ineffaceable mark, the wrinkle left by her half damp lips.

Bup, why shall I continue with this cold explanation? Anyone who has not lived it will be able to find words equal to it, because it is a living thing.

Then, she told me she loved me and I was about to go mad. Who says honey is sweet? Let them hold their peace, please.

A maddening afternoon, yes, a maddening one. Eternity this!

Unable to write, unable to sleep, incapable of anything, I'm going out. It's raining again, and under my umbrella, I go away to enjoy my plenitude in loneliness.

Let them leave me alone: I'm enough myself not to get bored today.

Her lips on mine... and in my ears her killing «I love you».

XX

This morning, like these last days, I was bursting with the idea of getting wet. Don't be shocked: it's true, really. I got completely wet on purpose.

Become young again through this flow of happiness, I've made my way to the park, without my umbrella, and I felt the fresh small drops sliding down on my face. Sometimes, as I looked upwards, a big bead from the branches woke up my sleepy eyes.

My shaken heart has half heard the usual message of the quiet rain. I was happy because I could feel.

After having tasted the dampness of the rain mingled with the warmth of the skin of my face, I left Zerubide to go home, quite wet, but happy.

And suddenly, my heart missed a beat. Instead of the beloved image of Miren, I saw a poor old woman before me. She was all dressed in dark black, her face dirty, and her skirt in tatters. Penniless, having lost everything, the miserable woman was incapable of doing

anything, not even tidying herself to go out. What could make that pitiful woman endure that? What, but fear of death? If she was living, she was only living not to die. «Death», that unknown land: no traveller can return from its borders». Death: support and destruction of those living in the world...

The boat lost in the storm: sitting or standing bowed at a corner, head down, and the lottery tickets in her hands, the blind old woman; her endless chant almost too spent to hear: «los últimos que me quedan para hoy». I was watching people for a long time: swallowed by the noisy swirl of the moving mass, nobody had time to pay attention to her. Nobody stopped for her. What a fatal lost will in that woman!

I approached her. Her clothes were spoilt by the damp of the rain, and everything about her was squalid. Poor woman!

I got out my wallet and I gave her all the money I had, until I had not one cent left. And my previous content turned into internal peace. Though not without concern. Her warm thanks embarrassed me. I wanted my offering to be different, but it was impossible: the voice of the blind woman penetrated to my heart. I would have given her my life at that instant.

How senseless the world is! And what about the cruel violence of Luck! Everything for one, nothing for the other. Bursting with happiness myself, unable to cry the woman! What a satiric carnival of a world!

This one dancing, and the other one going to a funeral. Birth here, death there; marriage in such a place, burial in such another. This one doesn't know how to spend his fortune while this other one barely scratches enough to live...

XXI

I'm smelling the wet ground of the fields in Bolueta.

Miren's kisses worry me; and this is why she fascinates me. They don't fill me, they stimulate me. For, who said that happiness had to be peaceful?

When I'm with her, I usually feel wanting and anxious: I want more, as if what is given to me was little, and I'm joyful and sad in that wanting more. Do I need her body? No, no! And when I'm far from her, how painful! when I'm with Miren I feel fulfilled and worried, far from Miren, empty and dead.

What is she doing now? She told me she would be at home. Getting lunch ready? She may be having a rest, or looking at the countryside from the window... She moves her pupils like shy sparrows, and I'm here, unable to contemplate them.

I'm lying down. The grass caresses my face. It's a pity: I can't get my eyes deeper inside. How unexplored the world is!

I see thousands of delicate and graceful plants fighting each other to survive, forming a huge number of streets and squares. Among those «enormous trunks», a busy ant is making its way with no little trouble. Then, unable to advance, the heavy beetle crosses that «drowned forest». Though the spider is my companion at this moment, hundreds of strange small animals which are unknown to me appear at once. And as soon as they arrive at an unexpected clearing, they move in the grass, and do they know where they are going? I have a good view of the world in front of me; and isn't this similarity precisely the reason for my admiration of it?

A ladybird tickles my finger persistently and it has taken me back from my thoughts to the realm of feelings. And from it to that of childhood: «Amona manta gorri, gorri, gorri, gorri...». Children's most beloved animal. Because it had been the sacred insect of the Basque people, perhaps? It's climbing my finger. Always that striving upwards; and when it is impossible to go any higher because the top of my finger has been reached, it has to fly.

Wonderful: everything is alive. And I am too; I'm alive observing that liveliness. Who knows all these hidden worlds...? Who knows mine? Miren.

When I smell the wet earth, I'm glad to be an animal and to feel it. Because I am like the grass, that is to say, I'm a living thing.

XXII

I can't believe it: I've seen Miren with that boy of the other days. I'm completely amazed. How could it be? I greeted them roughly, and went on my way, as desperate as if I had the spectre of death right next to me.

As a matter of fact, and just in case, I've never mentioned the existence of this aversion, pretending thus not to be frightened. I had forgotten him and therefore I don't know who he is, nor the relationship existing between them.

I don't understand it. Miren has often admitted that she loves me. If someone should ask me for an explanation, I would not be able to give any; but even if I don't know what today's change means, I'm sure Miren really meant what she said these days.

How can I explain this unexpected event then? Variability: you're known as woman. Was Shakespeare right again?

Perhaps she also gives him the caresses she gives to me... No!!! Let fire devour me, let me die at once rather than suffer that.

I must leave this for today: I shall only write rubbish if I continue. It's true: I'd upset myself more and more.

I was thinking about this when she phoned: I tried to be as tough as possible; but she, on the contrary, was very sweet. I refused to listen, though she softly asked me to over and over again, and finally we made a date for tomorrow.

(«Three Coins» on the radio. No! I must turn it off.)

She'll have to explain everything tomorrow, and I pray God not to grow soft. I must know everything about that young man, from the beginning to the end; and I'll tell Miren that if I see her with him again, everything is over for ever.

I shall put an end to it.

I swear it.

XXIII

We met in Zerubide. Miren was already there when I arrived. And as I had decided yesterday, I approached her without saying a word, I slapped her. She began to cry and I realized my cruel lowness then. It was too late.

Hurt deep inside, Miren had no strength to explain anything. Not even to dry her tears. And when I saw this, where did my toughness go? My intentions of the day before had vanished by then.

Her tears stopped and I asked her soothingly to say something. No answer. I took her hands then: she did not even raise her eyes. Staring at the floor, she said nothing. I embraced her: in vain. Strange indeed: her bodiness meant nothing to me. Nothing at all.

I had a lump in my throat and I begged her to forgive me. Finally, completely shaken, she told me: «You don't know me. It's a pity. You can't realize how much you've hurt me with your meanness.»

Again, I asked her to pardon me. Did I know what really happened the day before? No, I didn't.

I kissed her cheek as softly as I could, without lust, as I would kiss my mother.

Miren began to speak:

«You'll be very disappointed, Joxeba, and you may think it is not true. However I promise that what I'm going to tell you is the whole truth.

The name of that boy is Andoni Iturzaeta. We've been friends a long time and we knew each other long before I met you. Our families have always been very close and this is how Andoni met me, I couldn't say how long ago.

Now, he is serving in the army, since spring, and he has had to leave. Before his military service, he used to come and see me very often, and even though he said nothing to me, I think he was in love with me. Women aren't often wrong in such matters.

He left three months ago, and he wrote to me very often. At first, I answered his letters, but one day Andoni came out and said he loved me. After that, I never wrote to him again.

He got permission to leave and as soon as he arrived, he phoned me.

He wanted to see me.

Though it was for a different reason, I had to see him too. And you can guess the rest: I told him the truth, and the poor fellow was completely broken up.

I kissed her as if I were mad, asking her to forgive me. And her tears moistened my thirsty lips. There was a fire in me.

That wonderful tenderness awakened and caressed my senses. I embraced her, I reached heaven, but It was hard for us to stay up on the slippery slope of happiness.

The colourful ascension of today has maddened me for ever.

My dear Miren: How shall I live without your heart?
I know: I shan't. Impossible. Impossible. Miren...

SUMMER

Note of the compiler:

Though we have been looking for Leturia's notes, we've found nothing about this period of «summer».

We are aware, and the reader will soon realize that there is something missing in the diary: the period referring to his marriage.

Why? The explanation is as follows:

Was Leturia happy at this time? We think so. But we don't know if he was completely happy, or only glad.

But this is the most acceptable hypothesis: Leturia didn't write in this period. This is why no note has been found.

And, probably, this being so, the lack of the diary means a lot as it is the demonstration that Leturia was not in the mood to write.

Who writes? when does someone write? We're referring to diaries.

If we analyse literature, we shall immediately notice something: most famous writers of diaries had many personal problems.

In this world, as modern man has lost his religious faith, worries and doubts have increased personal diaries being thus more and more frequent until they have become a literary fashion.

There are many examples to corroborate this and we shall only mention to the reader two of them: Kafka and Amiel. In the opinion of many people, both of them may be described as paranoics.

On the other hand, then, diaries have been written by introverts and neurotics. And Leturia was not in our opinion one of them though he was quite near them.

On the other hand, there are people who do write diaries even if they are not half crazy. Everybody has known sometime in his life the «diary period»; and this is the best way to understand Leturia's omission and its significance.

When do people write diaries? When darkness possesses one's dark soul.

Darkness is poetry. Joy does not lead to poetry. Or didn't you realize it until now? The cheerfulness of the world is difficult to explain: it doesn't move us deeply because it is not a complete sentiment. Sadness, on the contrary, penetrates our hearts. And if the first emotion is barren and scarce, the second is rich and plentiful.

Who has ever lived complete happiness? Nobody.

Two thousands and five hundreds years have passed since Buddha said: «Have you ever been happy? Never.»

We only know happiness in part and through imagination, and more than feeling it inside we perceive it. Sadness, however, anguish, dissatisfaction, we all know them, and so well that we even avoid mentioning them.

We can't say what joy and happiness are like in themselves, but we know that they are so in this world, that the poet has written much more and much better about sadness than about satisfaction.

Only the Eastern countries have been able to assume ideal happiness, thus beating the Europeans.

That's why we usually write when we're sad or impatient: until we hear our beloved woman assent, until we find our way towards God, until what must be done goes wrong etc.; in a word: until we have overcome our worries.

And this is what Leturia clearly demonstrates.

This behaviour is a mere escapism from the psychoanalyst's point of view; and this would really appear to be true: as we empty our worries and our anxieties out on paper, the inner tension seems to lessen.

Therefore, Leturia was happy during the first months following his marriage, this is what this silence means.

What did he do during these months? We don't know, and we shall probably never know. The reader may imagine what he likes.

It's a pity. It seems we know the unhappy Leturia better than the happy one. But has he been happy? We do know that he has been unhappy; yet we know nothing of his happiness. Is this the point? It might be.

We are aware that some people think that Leturia's *Diary* will only increase the present habit, the habit to describe the introvert and desperate man. They say that literature takes ill-man as the model of man; and many pseudo-positivists affirm that this tendency has created a false image.

Though we don't deny they are right to a certain degree, this is what we reply: why has the clover not got four leaves?

But things being what they are, we won't put forward any event. The compiler has had more than enough to express himself. Let's, then, make way for our Leturia.

AUTUMN

I

I can't write. It's been a long time since I last wrote anything at all; and today, having lost the habit, it will be very hard for me to express what disturbs my inside clearly enough.

What I'm going to write is really hard. Those who have been capable of writing such things are not many. And if I knew that the following would be known in the future, I wonder if I wouldn't step back.

It's really difficult to say: Miren doesn't make me happy. I'm as anxious as before my marriage.

At that time, though sometimes only, it seemed that, blinded by passion, heaven itself was with us when we gave ourselves to each other: we confused the passion of the blood with happiness.

That situation, however, was nothing but lack of balance; and today as the days pass and everything returns to its initial state, what can I do?

I have been happy from time to time, yes, until passion disappeared. Then, nothingness was born between us; and extinguished the fire, no fire and no ashes

remain: only smoke. And the fuel we gathered has vanished in smoke.

The emptiness that filled my life has gone. I've sought what I needed. And, what? Shakespeare was right when he said that for want of seeking something, one loses everything when, having one's own will, nothing can satisfy us.

The myth destroyed, and the excitement flown, broken the heart, the emptiness burrows deeper. I'm tired of seeking what I desired.

Don't say it because I know it: I praised Miren too much. Inconsciously, I made a Goddess of her, and my present desperation began then.

But, what could I do then to escape from that eulogy? What, now, to free myself from this present state?

Miren is kind, and she really loves me. To be honest, that sort of love is incomprehensible to me; and when I compare her love to mine, I tremble: mine is nothing compared with hers.

As a matter of fact, my heart needs more, it asks more persistently than before for «something». And, what can I give it? This is not what I needed. Miren, seemingly, is not what would satisfy it.

A few weeks ago, I used to wait for night fall impatiently; but I was not waiting, my body was.

The approaching evening annoys and disgusts me because inevitably my insatisfaction will grow and penetrate deeper inside after it.

Nobody will ever know this. No, God, I beg you!

And what has cheated me? No, I shan't blame Miren; I have deceived myself.

I often heard that it is impossible to appease our hunger for happiness; and after all, even if I have loudly confessed it, what have I done to avoid falling into this dark cave of desperation?

Nothing.

I've behaved like an imbecil, what a fool I've been! And then...

I fear the future. What is the solution for me?

II

I've been in Zerubide. Fallen leaves all about. The park reddish and gloomy when I walked near the duck pond. The light was dull and the atmosphere rainy. Not cold.

A couple of newlyweds has come, they have taken some photographs and left.

Suddenly, I have remembered the wedding I saw long ago, and if I was moved then, the sensation I felt today by this thought has been sharper.

That one then and this one now are two different men, though we both have the same name: Joxeba Leturia. I saw the first couple in spring last year, and this second one in Autumn: perhaps this too means something.

In a word, it's completely different.

I can't believe it. I was like today's newlyweds: full of hope, smiling like them convinced I had reached the Great Happiness.

I have observed their gestures and their walk, and found them too quick. Expressive for sure but as if they were nervous and anxious. There's no such quickness in me: I move slowly, I'm not the same as before. I can explain it with a single word: they're young, I'm old.

It's clear: the act of choosing kills the fascination. And without fascination, there's no youth. Why did I choose then, if I could stay young? That was my fault. The act of choosing has made me old. Whoever has made a choice fails irremediably. My friend Jon is right when he says: «Rather than in love, we're mesmerized.

What will become of those poor fellows when they wake up? The same as to me, certainly.

Oh, what a foolish world! No way to learn from the others.

Even my lamentations are useless.

III

How beautiful the sea was today: I can still see it, blue and calm. And as I was wandering the avenue of Zuhaztieta, I met Jon.

We had a long conversation; or more exactly, he was talking all the time; I was only able to say a few things. He began talking about the Armentias' splitting up. I knew something about it, but he told me the story with full details. Anyway, he always knows anything that's worth knowing, I don't know how he manages.

«He's left a son», he added, «and he's gone to America. One must be brave to do a thing like that. It looks easy from the outside but take his place, and you'll see».

Did he have to say this?

«The trouble is the kid, as always. Nothing but the children confirm the bans of marriage. If not and if it is the manner of wise people to rapair their faults, why not in this case? If there is any difficult choice, this is it.

«The Armentias have had a lot of problems before this; and if things keep going badly; what could they expect?

«I think there's a flaw in marriage: impossible to test it beforehand. Let the «honest Joes» and the ortodox say what they like; this will always be the source of countless misery. And it seems to be an irreparable flaw».

I was about to reply, but said nothing in the end: though I had something in mind, I saw no reason to explain it.

«Besides, middle class people find it quite hard not to fall into «The fault». Rumours in society are a strong tie: that thought is highly improper nowadays...»

I was a little disgusted by his shamelessness on this point.

«Moreover, there are other «love-matters»... for, what can a woman on her own do after leaving her husband? Lack of money is what holds you back in such cases».

This easiness was unbearable, but wasn't Jon right?

«This is how the silent abyss is dug between married people, and neither of them says anything. Because they're happy? No, for God's sake. My experience is limited (and learned from others, of course) but it leads me to one conclusion: we know very little about marriage, and the truth is crueller than we think.»

«I'm not shocked at all, you know: I call it the consequence of hypnosis».

The support of balance has been pulled out from under me and I returned home badly hurt. I've lay on my bed and punched the pillow violently.

This trial by society is what disgusts me most; because it is real. There's nothing more repulsive than this: to behave falsely because of what people say... No!

What is it that I had with Miren, then?

IV

Mikel's way of thinking is amazing. I've just been with him, and his words have made me think.

His present girlfriend is called Miriam. Nobody has eyes like hers, Mikel is more deeply moved than ever, neither of them goes anywhere without the other... It seems impossible to fall in love so identically and so often. Always the same dreams, the same words, the same sensations, and as new as if they were dreamt, used, felt for the first time.

«No, no, Joxeba, I'll tell you this honestly: it won't be like before this time. Miriam has deeply touched my heart, and everything I have is for her, really».

— «Then, if things don't go wrong, there's no other way but to get married, is there?

— «Why? No, not at all. Your mentality has been left behind. Why should I marry? We shall spend our time as best as we can, and if I see things getting too affectionate, I'll simply break off. Now, no sentimentality in this: I shall feel pity for nobody. I'm used to it.

And Miriam?

She knows I don't intend to get married, I told her so. The beginning is the beautiful thing; so, let's begin as many times as possible. Now, for example, I'm burning with love, I've almost become a poet because of Miriam. And you're asking me to give this up? How could I give up my only way to happiness? I'd rather have my head cut off.

«I know that if I became attached to someone I'd feel disgusted. What do you want me to do then, hang myself? I can't. My freedom is more important than anything else, for I know that for a married person this is very unjust and that it is to waste one's life with silly things. But, among other things, this is what I was born for.

That course is foolish in my mind; however, Mikel is always happy.

Perhaps he knows himself better than I do myself, and his joy comes from this knowledge: because he behaves according to his character.

And, inwardly, don't I envy Mikel? Maybe. There are three sorts of man according to Ortega: those who have been Don Juans, those who think they have been Don Juans, and those who because «they wanted to» have never been a Don Juan. Does my secret envy of Mikel lie in this? I think it does to a certain extent.

However, there is another case or inducement for the soul, and I believe this is the key. Mikel doesn't make

his choice: it remains in his hands; he hasn't known the consequences of the act of choosing, and this is why he is so joyful.

But, going deeper, is he really free? He's chosen not to choose in my opinion, and that is nonsense. Nothing but deceiving himself. If at least he had taken that way after thinking it over... But I don't think he has. He's chosen the way of blindness unconsciously or without thinking it over, and that is falseness, the most despicable falseness for a man.

Instead of choosing the authentic life, Mikel has taken the unauthentic one deliberately and resolutely.

I can't agree with him.

V

Under the pretext of some trouble with my job, I left Miren at home, and I went to Ibaeta. At sunset, the young couples crowded the place.

I went there in search of something to criticize, and how easily have I found it. Those small men excessively bold in the darkness, the same old stupidities in their mouths, hiding themselves behind the trees as I pass near them. Looking for happiness, they all pronounced the same words as always to seduce their partners until they themselves believe them. They are all alike and everyone of them believe they love. Instincts and desire all dressed up with the fanciest names! The most insistent caresses mingled with the loftiest concepts... What a cruel joke!

Suddenly, it occurred to me that all boys and girls became males.

What a diabolical sight it was! I was nearly sick I think. What an apparition!

Therefore, it is lust that brings them there every evening. This must be it, there's no other possible explanation. I can't submit to this.

I remember Freud and I agree that he is absolutely right. What would become of all this without mankind? Of so many things? Nothing. Instinct awakens in us the desire for happiness in our puberty; it holds on, it gives birth to our most important dreams; it conjures up the cruellest blows, and according to some people, it creates love (at least when it does). It is through it that our emptiness in life becomes painful, ask me otherwise.

What are we without it? Not much. Leaving aside the Avenue of Ibaeta, impossible to explain the silent story of Altzurain. Similarly, it is impossible to understand man without bearing in mind the existence of hormones.

Back home, I was still thinking about this when suddenly, as if illuminated by a lightening bolt, I saw Miren transformed into a man. My eyes opened big and wide. How frightening! Like Banquo and Macbeth. The male Miren was right in front of me, and I stepped back in horror, I ran across a small table and the vase on it smashed onto the floor. I was still more frightened and my heart was about to explode. I looked right and left... and I'm sure I saw her. Miren came in from the kitchen, I made some excuse without daring to look at her face, and she got very angry about the broken vase.

Yes, I'm going mad, I feel it: now, alone and well awake, I remember it and I can hardly avoid shouting. The sight of a dead body dressed in a suit, pale, bluish eyes rising from its coffin couldn't be more terrifying for me. God, how frightened I was!

Now, I possess the understanding of fools, I feel completely and deeply ashamed of the love law. How disgusting! The mere memory of that apparition is enough to make me sick.

Love... where does Nature lead us!... She makes use of us as she pleases, letting us believe we are self possessed. what a pretty game to play at!

Was it Gide's problem? Not exactly. But if his worries were these, I'm not very far from him, and I understand him.

I'm afraid of finding myself alone with Miren.

VI

I've been avoiding Miren's eyes lately, and she's noticed it.

«I disgust you. Don't deny it. I disgust you! If only I could make myself beautiful, if only I could become the most beautiful woman in the world to offer the best of myself to you, to make you somehow happy... How miserable I am!»

And she began to cry. And I, seeing her in such a state, was trying to find the words to say, oh but I'm cruel! All the fountains of my heart have dried up, and reason has prevailed over the sentiments.

Miren is not wrong. But what I feel is not disgust: I'm terrified of showing my internal feelings. If I should open myself up I'd be lost in horrible shame. who can imagine the darkness in which my rotten heart is wrapped?

I've been bothered twice by Miren; and in both cases, her «bodiness» was the cause.

It first happened during our engagement. At times, I was more distant precisely because of that bodiness. It was really strange: her body made me remote because it was a body, because it was evil, because it was finite and heavy. I disliked having to show my internal fascination through my body then.

Now, on the contrary, it's completely different. I don't mind feeling her bodiness near me when I'm tired. There's no corporal barrier. But from time to time, when my blood warms up and I want to embrace her and to take up, that bodiness revolts me; not for the same reason as during our engagement but because, like a slave, I'm chained to the dictation and the passion of my instincts. I consider it revolting to be the toy of that power which dominates us all. Though I think I'm free, I know I'm not. And I want to be free, I want to be self-possessed! I must be the one who decides my future.

This being so, the situation between us is becoming more and more difficult. A dreadful coldness freezes our lunch time meetings. The radio tries to awake what is completely dead. To no avail. It is an external noise, and our silence is a very internal one; its murmur vanishes between us without a trace, as the breeze does between the rocks hardened by the winter.

Miren has noticed everything, and I can do nothing to please her.

Yesterday, giving some pretext, I refused her once again.

«You've never loved me. Even when you asked and begged me you were imploring that which was to be won in me, not me. Your love for me has been the story of a possession. You've never loved anyone but yourself. You're selfish. why didn't I realize it at the right time?»

She took me in her arms, madly, with all her strength as if she had been shot, and completely in distress she added: «It's too late now. I love you, Joxeba, you'll know my grief the day you understand these words.»

When I saw that, my inside softened. My eternal fault. Today, however, as I think it over, I realize this: her tears don't change the situation. So, why should I change my behaviour? Shall I deny my thought?

VII

What would have happened if I had married someone else? Would I find myself in the same trouble? This is what the devil stuck in my mind last night. Is Miren herself the origin of all these events...?

Unable to sleep, I've been thinking about it and now, I know she is not. Miren is nice, kind-hearted, home-loving and fair. She really loves me. What could I find in another woman? Nothing. Anyone would agree with me on this point.

I've failed with myself, not with Miren. I didn't realize that the act of choosing was so awkward. I didn't choose conscientiously. And shall I waste all my life because once, unawares, I made a mistake? I regret what I've done; but is there anything else? what has been done unconsciously is not a sin, shall I spend the rest of my life moaning helplessly?

Something must be done to correct one's faults, something must be thought of. Otherwise, the ghost of

my failure will spoil my life, and it won't disappear because I know I've made a mistake. No doubt about it.

Therefore, I must come back to the Main Route before I continue.

VIII

A fleeting afternoon in Zerubide. The distant noise of a radio makes it still more fleeting. The last leaves hang from the branches with great difficulty. Those on the ground have lost their charm, creased and faded by the rain, very much like corpses. The sky overcast, and the long clouds sticking out in the purple blue.

The same small fountain as always before me. Everything fleeting. The afternoon passes quickly, like all autumn afternoons. Fleeting, short, fragile: these are the adequate words for this atmosphere.

Leaning on his stick, an old man has arrived in front of me. He's sat down and now he's looking nowhere. The look fixed on the void, what does the poor devil feel? Perhaps forgotten and abandoned by all, what does he hope now?... Life has gone so quickly! Before getting used to it, the illnesses, those messengers of death, have already possessed me. God, how short! when I was young, I lived believing that I would have a rest some-

time, but the years have passed and I'm still waiting for that peaceful «sometime». Is death then the peace I've been waiting for so willingly?

He's looked at me now, and he's embarrassed me. Though he is not speaking, I can hear him: Dear young man, «Qu'est-ce que tu as fait de ta jeunesse?»

Don't remind me, please!

«Your fascination will fade and vanish soon, too soon. You will remember this secret and silent conversation much sooner than you think, and you'll have a stick in your hand, like me. Time passes very quickly, as quickly as silently; this is why it doesn't awaken us. Soon, you'll see in front of you the Main Motivation of life transformed into a unique hope: The Third Parcae. And you will always have Homer's words in full view to make you doubt and worry: «Only the dead know what pain is».

Enough! I was wrong to be pleased with my strength and my youth, and I've taken my pen: live, live, live, live...! And death... The only inevitable thing to man...

An incredible splendiddness has invaded me, and I got drunk on vitality. The darknes makes the light shine, the blackness of the night the stars, the bitter the sweet.

I remember my birth, my real birth, yes: I was born when I began to write the Diary because it was at that time I felt the desire to live. Suddenly, and without knowing why, I found a touch of poetry in everything. It was like a bird. 'Something' new was speaking to me

for the first time, leaving the consequences of my emptiness and sadness far behind.

I was lacking 'something' which was outside of myself, and I found it all in Miren when I met her, she was that 'somethig'

At that time, when I use to go to 'Zerubide', it was the 'After' which beat strongly in myself, 'After'. When I would be with Miren, I would be happy, I would be this and that. After, after, after... The 'After' was the essence of the poetry, and that wish, that strange darkness came out of that futurity.

Now, Miren is completely mine, there's no 'after'; yet that inexplicable touch of poetry is still alive in me. But it has taken a different shape or colour: that 'After' has become a 'Where'. Once, I confirmed it; now I ask. The day which was to be the future then has gone for ever. Fascination has been replaced by Nostalgia and the desire to live by the steadiness of death.

I've passed from the flower garden of fascination to the den of despair.

The sunset, I feel the winter is approaching, these cold high winds are its harbingers.

All complaints have weakened in me, except the one my heart. I want to live! I want to live for ever! I want to be happy! Where are you? Is everything against me?

I'm calling in vain. Not even a sparrow. Not a reassuring word for me, nothing.

And what's happened with my reason, why can't it emerge from this darkness?

Night is coming, a black night with no stars, you night: mother of silence, twin sister of nothingness.

It's coming slowly, like my last hour.

'La vie s'en va, Madame, la vie s'en va... Hélas! La vie non; mais nous nous en allons...'

No!!

Is this a cry?

Am I not imploring?

IX

The strength of wine is incomparable. Poets and many others like them know this well, and everyone of them takes some before they set themselves to work.

The poetry the wine induces is unique. Now I'm drunk, a new light rises in me, and I can see my problems clearer than ever.

It has been pure fascination... I saw in Miren what was not there, I attributed happiness to her. Why would she own what I lacked myself?

That's the mistake of love: to put on someone else the happiness one wishes. Why make a 'where' of our longings for happiness?

This is the love fascination, and this is the explanation of all lovers' despair we made a mistake when we fell in love. Nobody can be someone else's search for happiness. However, the lover always commits the same mistake. Therefore, the dispartition continues irremediably. How could it not?

Pure fascination, yes: you're been my fascination, Miren, though neither of us wanted it.

However, now that I know that you have been nothing but fascination, I feel disgusted and apathetic, sapped of my desire to live.

If fascination gave me support, knowledge will destroy me.

'Hypnosis' says Jon. I don't think he is aware of what a cruel truth it is. God, how cruel the truth is!

And you're welcome here, you Navarrese wine, because you give me bright sight.

I will get drunk oftener from now on...

X

I've seen myself in the mirror, and I've trembled: I have the eyes of a madman!!! Not only the eyes, but my whole appearance. My eye baths are terrible and my pupils seem two sparks. I'm completely broken.

It has greatly impressed me: how amazing! I've thought I was someone else for a moment, my personality has split, and I trembled in fright. Are these ill founded imaginations?

On the other hand, this is not the first time it has happened. Sometimes, when talking with someone, I'm also scared when I notice they are slowly observing me. And nervous and doubtful, I wake up as if I had a frightful black nightmare. And more than once I was about to ask: 'What are you looking at like that? What's wrong with me? What do you see in me? Maybe I look like a madman?' I'm afraid, terribly afraid to go mad.

It's been hard before, really worrying. In the mirror, I've really seen myself as if I was another man. Shall I

have to go to the doctor's? I don't know. But this dreadful events have frightened me.

I looked around, and cooled down, nobody had seen me.

As a matter of fact, this is not very strange. Yesterday, like many other times, I have had the same discussion as always with Miren. I can't overcome my disgust, and every two days I hear I'm distant and cold.

After two or three wounding remarks, Miren remained silent, she said nothing more. Later, however, thinking I was asleep, she began to cry, and she continued weeping very quietly for a long time.

Her tears touched me deeply, and I felt like telling her the whole truth. But, what could I say? That I didn't love her? Would this not be worse than my silence?

I didn't think so. Suddenly, when I was about to wake from my sleep, something came to my mind: What would I do from then on? If it was not to improve and to soften our relationship, why would I say anything?

I would have spoken at that moment: moved by my heart, I was ready to promise anything, but I know the heart's tricks too well: once the moment passes, one regrets what has been done. No, no: if I «woke up» then, I would not be able to continue the soft way I had opened. If I did wrong (and doing wrong was to listen to my heart) regret and guilt would come later; and that was not the right thing to do. My weakness would suffocate me because feebleness was simply fleeting.

And I resisted, I defeated my heart.

Isn't this situation revolting? More even: it's unbearable. It's impossible to live like this. Besides, Miren is totally suspicious. She thinks there's another woman. Two days ago, I came home quite late, and I caught Miren trying to open the drawer of my desk. I said nothing. She noticed I «write» something and she's looking for it as if it were her enemy. She's found nothing. If she were to read my diary, it would be the end of me.

And, after all, is this life? Miren suspicious, she doesn't trust me, always anxious; I, on the other hand, disgusted, almost mad, fighting against myself.

We hardly talk. Who could have guessed this during our smiling engagement? A terrible coldness has filled everything between us. We are a pitiful couple, believe me.

No, this can't go on any longer.

XI

How amazing! It made me laugh first, and then cry. Jon has fallen in love! Yes, Jon; even the intelligent Jon has fallen into this «hypnosis».

All alike. Who could have expected this? He was always joking, he would never fall into that fascination, he was always criticizing...

Besides, he feels «completely crazy». Of course!

«Yes, Joxeba, I know it will make you laugh. I'm amazed myself, more than you. I still believe what I used to say, and I think that, like in any other place, «hypnosis» and love are in a very close relationship. But the mind sees this, nothing else but our mind is aware of this truth. Therefore, though I'm the same as always in my mind, I'm different in essence.

«No, Joxeba, don't pretend to be shocked, even if you really are. You will confirm this perhaps. The heart is above the mind, and it is closer and more tied to our lives than knowledge is. This is the explanation I have found.

«And I'm crazy about her; day and night, I'm thinking about Lore, wishing to be with her twenty four hours of the day.

«Moreover, I behave much more sentimentally than anybody else lately. I'd give you some details... But I'd be ashamed, we'd be ashamed more exactly... and I'd rather say nothing.

«I can't live without Lore».

The same fascination as always, the same mistake, the same foolish imaginations. Always the same old story.

But Jon has surprised me; I didn't realize anything myself, but he knew everything and he has also fallen. How can such nonsense be understood? How long has man been a thinking being?

The usual words again: I can't live, she is my heart, etc. The same old song!!

Man learns nothing, except from direct experience. This is a bitter pill, but it is the truth. One cares nothing about others' regrets and this being so, humanity constantly falls into the same pitfalls, but to no avail, nothing is learnt. From generation to generation, the mistakes are repeated and it will be so as long as the earth turns.

We all have incarnated heaven more than once. And, therefore, isn't the fact that everyone finds that incarnation in his own town strange, simply and amazingly strange? Whoever will appease our heavy thirst for hap-

piness always happens be near us... How funny indeed!!!

And, on the other hand, apparently we also happen to be able to appease someone else's «thirst for happiness»... How? How do we manage to fall once and again in that terrible nonsense? It' unbelievable.

And Jon himself mesmerised...

I am sick!

XII

As usual, drinking increases my intuition, and at the same time, It lets me escape from myself. After all, life becomes more livable.

I see my past like a film.

There was more light at that time. Now, except my desire for happiness, everything is dark.

Strange. The more my wish for happiness grows, the less I want to live. Fascination killed my search for happiness and gave birth to my eagerness for life. Why? Because happiness seemed attainable through Miren. And the desire for Happiness became a desire for Love. A pseudo-need of Miren, a heart need.

The fascination always leads to its own destruction. Death is its life-law. Its nothingness is its strength, and it is nothing but anxiety until it disappears. Let give time to any fascination, and as soon as the objective is sought, it will of its own become nothingness.

Fascination needs time to show its real essence, nothing else. That's why we grow older and more emotional.

As fascination fills us (that is, kills us) darkness takes over irremediably.

Thoughts kill the fascination which opened for them the way to achieve the objective. Achievement and death: this is the law...

«Please, give me an impossible love... «Yes, yes. Where are the successes? Where are the secret unlimited ways? I don't want to get anywhere!!

When there is a wish, the idea of the unfulfilment of the wish is revolting. But isn't the fulfilment itself more revolting?

If what desire asks for is not achieved, the strength or the tendency of this wish will be dissatisfaction and lameness. But if it is fulfilled, the whole being, the whole self will become thirsty, completely desperate, not knowing where to head for. The first time, one is struck by a fascination, the second time, by the whole self. Therefore, the sadness which follows the unfulfilled wish. In other words, achievement is worse than failure.

The fading of the fascination kills hope, its permanence as «un», on the contrary, revives it.

This is why fascination is more powerful and more influential than success, and walking somewhere more than arriving somewhere. Thus, failure is the greatest support of the world. Death I said once; failure now...

Sometimes, all this is reminiscent of Buddha. Perhaps.
And so what if so?

If it has become clear to me thanks to the wine, I
don't mind drunkenness.

XIII

The usual discussion last night, I'm fed up. Her love is too heavy for me to bear. It's always the same old story. I didn't think it possible to use the same words so many times, always the same, always! The «I love you» and similars really make me angry, I've heard them hundreds of times. Why do I have to hear them again?

If Miren had forgotten, it would have been better for both of us. And I would not hear these tiresome remarks anymore.

Everyday the same! Her loving look makes me want to leave.

Impossible! For God's sake!

XIV

I don't know how long it has been since I have written anything. What for? I've born my weariness in silence, not even here have I mentioned it.

These last weeks have been difficult. To be truthful, the same as the others. But these problems have joined the others, and this is precisely what has made them wearisome.

I can't ignore the episode of yesterday. The most terrible thing that ever happened to me. I've had an unforgettable night, yes, but not for its joy precisely. What a nightmare! It was more terrible and horrible than my imagination could have made up when awake. Where could I have taken such barbarisms from?

Miren was asleep, deeply asleep. I looked at her, my blood strangely boiling. An inexplicable fury took possession of me and I held her neck with both hands. I began to squeeze more and more strongly, with no fear. And the more I squeezed, the more my blood warmed

and swelled, as if it couldn't remain in my veins any longer.

Miren wanted to say something: I saw it in her mad eyes. The image of that sad look will never disappear in me. But at that moment, instead of softening me, it made me more merciless, I don't know why, and her weakness gave me new strength.

I still feel her spasms. How furious I was! I've know the pleasure of murder in a dream and I'm frightened.

A piercing scream shook me. It was Miren; of course. I knew she was deeply asleep, and as I thought the strangulation had been successful I was very afraid.

My heart beats felt like hammer-blows and my chest was deeply tired, as if a very heavy weight had been put there. I could hardly breathe and my veins were agitated by the heavy beats. How distressing!

I heard another scream, still more piercing than the other one and I was as terrified as if I was at the door of hell. And I also shouted loudly.

«My hands squeezed Miren's neck until they hurt. I can't explain that sensation: among the screams, wanting to strangle her, a very heavy weight on the heart beating like a hammer, the warmth... How should I know!

Our screams were heard more and more, mingled one with the other, and even if I was myself about to suffocate, I didn't woke up. I could only listen.

Finally, I woke up. Miren was holding my arms, trying to wake me up, and my mad-like face had frighten-

ed her. It weemed like I was going to explode and I can guess what my eyes were like: similar to those I saw in the mirror that day.

Miren was as frightened as I, and she showered me with questions. I answered as little as I could, and I told her it was a nightmare. Nothing more. What else could I have said?

I tried to sleep again, but in vain. I still tremble when I remember the screams, this is why I've spent the whole night frightened, terrified of hearing the screams again. My hair has stood on end more than once, and it will be so from now on. To hear, and to be unable to wake up. Have I known by accident, what precedes death?

XV

I've analysed my situation slowly, and I see only one solution: to leave home. I've been thinking about it for a long time, and there's no other way.

I'm going to leave this place. I want to know everything, I want to try everything; and after doing all this, I shall choose. What has happened is clear in my mind. I chose the way without thinking it over (Miren), (knowing nothing but Miren). Until it became a way, and it went wrong. How could it not? Why not? Do we only possess one heart?

I seized the first fascination I saw, persuaded to have found The Truth and The Way; I've realized, however, that unfortunately it was no such thing and that I had taken the wrong way.

That's why I'm leaving home. And I'm going to Paris: if it is possible to make the right choice somewhere, one may choose there obviously. I shall know everything and after denying my foolish heart, I shall

rationally choose what will fill me up, that is my true way.

I don't know when I shall come back, or even if I shall come back to Altzurain. I might leave this place for ever, who knows?

It's difficult to leave: to abandon my birthplace, to lose my youth, to go away from my town... to deceive and to abandon Miren, all touches me very deeply.

But I must make good use of my freedom. I was mistaken once, let me correct that fault now, and let me start to live again. It's a cruel betrayal; to leave this, but wouldn't I be more treacherous if I destroyed myself without thinking through it or if I wasted the only opportunity which has been given to me? We only live once, and we won't be able to choose back our choice more than once.

I didn't realize this in time. It is too late but I want to reconsider my wrong steps because I'm still in time to correct them.

We've been given a brain to think, let's think about the yearning for happiness of the heart then. This is how we are self-possessed.

And what shall I say to poor Miren? If she should know I am, I'd be lost: she'd come to me. I can't tell her, and I will have to leave secretly.

I'll tell her I'm leaving for a few days and that I'm going on business, that's all. We'll see later. I myself ignore the future.

It's difficult decision, and I may regret it later. But, I must do it at least if I don't want to lose my reason.

Good Bye, Altzurain! Good bye, everybody! I'm going to leave man's itinerary consciously. Good bye!

WINTER

I

I'm writing this on the train to Paris. I'm aware of the change by the speed: 140 km an hour. And I feel myself lighter, like the train, as if I was born again.

The clouds are higher, and the countryside seems wider: only a few small hills appear from time to time. The rest is very flat and vast. Here, my lungs breathe much deeper, and I'm happy again.

I'm self-possessed. Today is full of hope for me: that is what the green fields and the grey grooves suggest to me.

It seems I've woken up. I look at everything like a child, amazed, crazy, optimistic...

The change of the language affects me in the same way. I must take the role of a child: I must make an effort to understand, I must adopt a similar intonation if I am to be understood, and above all, I must behave like a child.

Here lies, in my opinion, the pleasure of making one's way: one is born and we admire the most ordinary

things in the world like children. And who is closer to happiness than a child? It's admirable; and one has to admire anything to get into its charm. This newness is precisely what creates poetry.

Yes. Undoubtedly, whoever travels is born again. Everything new. As in childhood... How fascinating!

Paris is still far, but I'll arrive earlier than I thought. I don't know Paris and I think I'll like it. It's very famous. More than like it, I think it will fill me up, sufficiently at least so as to find myself.

The last farewell was sad. I made light of the journey, of course, but Miren noticed something. I could see it clearly in her attitude. And it was quite difficult not to give up at the sight of her pitiable state. She's embraced me thousands of times with her whole strength while she was saying:

— «I'm afraid to lose you, Joxeba. If you were leaving for ever now... Please, do tell me you love me. Tell me you'll come back as soon as possible. You've been very brusque with me lately, put an end to it now at least, and tell me something tender. I must hear it!!! And I need you!!! Don't you realize it?!!

These words have touched me deeply, but I tried to remember the «other» betrayal. My heart needs a more vivifying happiness than the one Miren was giving to me, and I must try to find it. Moreover, I chose my profession without thinking, and I'm not happy at all.

Why otherwise do I own a mind then if not to seek with it?

I must choose my way consciously and well aware, otherwise, Chance will be the master and most of the time it brings misfortune.

—«I think I've lost you. Where are those warm caresses and kisses you gave me at the beginning, Joxeba? You're fed up with me... And perhaps you're leaving to escape from me. Tell me it is not so, please.»

I've managed to say no. The necessary lie has come out with great difficulty.

Later, in the station, she has not wept until the departure of my train. She cried afterwards. She waved her handkerchief until the last moment, until the train disappeared behind the trees. My heart has rarely been so moved; but I'm happy now because I've been strong enough to be self possessed.

I know I'm dreadful, I have only thought of myself in this. But my decision called for it. What do I have an understanding for?

To look for my way.

May I find it!

II

I've come to Paris a few days ago, but my diary has not felt my pen yet. I couldn't find the moment and I've been leaving it more and more.

Having spent a few days here, what can I say about Paris? What have I been doing? Nothing at all. Nothing but walk. However, it is quite a lot. I've been everywhere, always on foot, and my only job has been to look. Every night, I've got into bed completely broken. It's hardly surprising.

Paris has the strength of the limitless. It seems one can't take possession of the city, its bigness flows from everywhere, life bursting forth and wandering its streets as if it had come to a new existence.

It seems infinite: or it is a thousand times bigger than man. This is what gives that special touch to it: the strength of Paris dominates completely.

And what has been most pleasant to me? It's not easy to answer. Many times I've wandered slowly the so-called «Quais», stopping in front of every «bouquiniste».

I don't know, but how wouldn't I stop at the sight of so many books?

At times, I've stood in front of those exquisite restaurants in the «Bois de Boulogne», wondering and doubtful, talking to myself. And when their lights were reflected in the clear pools, I've thought it was possible to reach happiness, because that was heaven provided that one could see heaven. How pleasant! And I've looked at the couples who were entering with great envy. Most of them newlyweds, of course. Wonderful fascination!

I have admired the «Arc de Triomphe», often, at sunset, and from the bright «Champs Elysées» avenue mainly, when it reflects its light majestically on the sky. I have also been in «Avenue Wilson», sitting in the quietly, while the sun hid behind the houses.

I think it fascinating to watch the mad coming and going of the «Champs Elysées», especially by night, and that of the wonderful «Rivoli» and «Place de la Concorde» also.

When I want to hear the roar of the city, like a distant storm in the sea, I go to the «Tuileries» gardens, and when I say there's no more beautiful sight, I'm not lying. No matter where I look, I always think I'm in a city of demi-Gods.

If you want to find Persia, you have only to go to the «Tetre» square by night. And to take a rest, you may go to the park of «Buttes Chaumont» and the

fatigue will disappear watching the cascade or the pool. Otherwise, go to the «Vert Galant» and look at the river «Seine».

And thousands and thousands of other places.

Without knowing how, little by little, I've felt as if I were overflowing, more and more filled.

Yesterday, for example, when I went to visit the Palace of «Chaillot», I was fully touched. Its beauty penetrated me to the heart and I was shaken by heavenly sensations when I read Paul Valéry's verses.

The distressing human pictures, the splendour of the palace, everything was moving, and those brief thoughts did me a lot of good. I've rarely felt the wound of poetry as deeply as those under those trees.

Because of all this, I'm like a drunk-man. The touch of infiniteness is what has made me drunk, nothing else but this. It has made me more perceptive, and I feel like Zerubide before I knew Miren; Paris has made me young again, and I'm eager to live again.

It's as if I were mad. The black emptiness of my heart has filled up with colours and now sadness itself seems pretty.

The search for happiness... The touch of infiniteness. The usual. I'm back in the love period. Unintentionally, I remember Miren, not because of her but because of my youth.

Thus, Paris acquires the touch of my first love: like in the former instance, it has given birth to my eager-

ness for life, like the former it has painted the emptiness of my soul in colours, like the former it has taught me many new pleasures.

And like the first love, once you have known Paris, you can never forget it. Like my first girlfriend, this wonderful city seems unforgettable to me.

III

I've made a great discovery.

As I said the first day, to submerge myself in this new world has made me younger; and the thrill for happiness is back. I'm able again to taste the poetry of the wind, more than before I think: the coldness of the wind has never caressed me as softly as today. It has become clear today, I've found the origin of the heart-emptiness: Man's search for happiness is thirst for God. My heart needed an Absolute. So as to draw pleasure and rest from it. I needed fullness, wholeness, total stillness, real peace, all of everything. How could a woman fill me up? Would someone as thirsty as myself relieve me?

A limited being could hardly relieve the infinite pain. Miren couldn't fill me, neither could any other woman.

The emptiness of man is religious in essence, and it can be filled by nothing in this world.

Therefore, I didn't choose the wrong woman. I'm about that now.

I understand very well what happens with fascination: there's always something more wonderful than the achievement of the fascination. I repeat it again: the actual facts remain hidden under the dreams. This is not very surprising: the dream shapes and nourishes the absolute through imagination. When we fall in love, for example, it is not the girlfriend always refers to love, because we attribute the qualities of the absolute to her, which in fact she doesn't possess.

And being so, the beauty of our thirst becomes richer (even if its origin is refusal) than that of the girl or the woman.

This is what has changed: the desire for the absolute makes the first love more exceptional, and later, it can't come up to reach the created myth.

The fascination is more beautiful than what has originated that fascination. Thus, the fact that one reaches and wins the object of the fascination always kills the fascination.

The fulfilment always destroys the dream, for the dream is embellished by God, though we don't realize it, and the fulfilment by the individual. The fascination itself dresses the absolute and this is the origin of what follows.

No fullness can really fill the individual: desperation will come irremediably.

Not only does he cheat love, but also any fascination. The origin of the latter failure is the root of the fascination.

Once the limit is reached, there's no fascination. Therefore, let's never reach it. This is what many people think. I've said many, and If I said everyone I wouldn't be very wrong.

If the act of reaching it kills the fascination, and if the fascination itself is more beautiful and richer than its fulfilment, the way itself is more interesting than the goal.

Let's walk towards the objective; this is how we can live happily enough. And to be able to walk, let us remove the limits. Behaving thus, we shall always have a place to walk and a direction in which to head, and we shall preserve the fascination and the hopes for happiness in the endless ways.

To create opportunities, to make up opportunities: here lies perhaps the salvation of man... If we don't reach it, let's walk at least, nonstop, towards happiness, without ever making it. There's no other alternative: the essence of things call for this behaviour.

I understand, now, the attractiveness of the impossible love: let's choose what can't be achieved, and the flower of fascination will never fade...

Yes... Yes... The truth...

But, God?

VI

I believe more firmly than ever that what I said the other day is true.

Emotions spring from the progression, from the walk. Death is not the most thrilling thing, but to die in anguish. Happiness and misfortune have their origin in the act of moving and changing. Whoever remains immobile doesn't make the heart sensitive: nothing but change, touches our sentiment. If there is no change, man will become unshakeable and totally cold.

And these are precisely the consequences of habit. Slowly it destroys every emotion because it applies to them a static quality; it erases the most terrible frights, it kills the greatest pleasures, it spoils the deepest interests. Habit is the assassin of the heart, because it puts an end to the novelty and at the same time it exhausts the capacity of emotion.

And happiness is an emotion, and it is governed by these laws. This is why I don't believe there can be real happiness in habit. In God, we don't know; but in this world, whoever is looking for happiness (this is to say:

everybody) can't stop: upwards or downwards. And this is what man's inside looks like.

This is the reason for my thinking religion a good thing. By making Heaven the objective of man, it transforms our lives into empty ways and it gives man one unique opportunity to preserve his hope and fascinations. Thanks to religion, the objective has gone out of life. In this, we can see how accurately and deeply the inventors of the religions knew the substance of man.

They knew perfectly well that every fascination disappears as the years pass, and that man's hope had to be placed behind death in order for it to last. Besides, by putting God himself as the objective, they eliminated all the mistakes, and we can state that they reasoned correctly.

The «materialists» may say whatever they like, but this is the proof of history, and through centuries man has appeared once and again at the origin of religion; the need of God is the very root of man: this is impossible to deny without denying man.

Moreover, religion presents another advantage, even if it is very small and half-comical: in the same way as the failure of the earthly is obvious, nobody can assert the wrongness of religion. Therefore, religion will always be a more permanent hope than the world.

On the other hand, when we consider life as a means to improve, the act of living becomes a task, that is to say, a way; and this is another reason for its success.

I think it necessary, for the moment at least, to let man doubt and make mistakes: he would have nothing to do without these defects, he would have no way; and if man is denied his way and his task, he is denied his substance itself, because the necessity to walk is the essence of man, that's all.

From this point of view, I think there's something else: the reason for the existence of misfortune. I think the essence of man requires injustice and despair. If these were to disappear, if any sorrow and every thirst could be appeased, what would be man's task?

Whereas if man has his walk motive, everything is all right.

Life is a walk then.

V

I'm discouraged. After mulling it over more, I've got further but the more I advance in this search for the truth, the darker I see it all.

Yes, I know I have to walk; there's no other alternative. But where to? It is true that those ways are necessary, but where do they take us? Nowhere? If I say we need a way (but without knowing where it leads to) my solution is nothing but a new trick.

This doesn't annul what I wrote the other day, it only means I have to go on. Shakespeare was right and I will remember his words: For want of seeking something, one loses everything when, having one's own will, nothing can satisfy us. This is the consequence of will and fascination. But shall we walk with intention to walk?

We must walk, but to walk is not the objective. There's no absolute in the root of the act of walking. It seems fully necessary but it doesn't fill us.

When we begin to run after a fascination, we are glad, really, though not because we think that soon after walking towards it, we shall achieve what we want. The walk is not what nourishes the hope and the pleasure, it is the idea of the objective getting nearer and nearer. If the goal is too far (and much more if there's no goal at all) one gets tired and doesn't feel like going on. To keep on moving, one must see an end to the journey at least.

In a word, one must have a goal, the ability to create fascinations; without it the walker loses his senses.

Every desire will be destroyed but it is impossible to walk without an objective.

Where is the objective, then? Which is The Way? They can't all have the same one. It is impossible to progress blindly: one has to see to be able to choose.

The walk is necessary; and if our duty was to walk blindly...

Impossible!!

VI

My mind has told me it is not the same thing. Even more: if I don't want to get lost, I can't take the wrong way. Is there anything more distressing to man than his own future? No, there isn't. I must try to make it clear to my mind with all my strength; if I was to make a mistake, I would destroy the most precious thing given to me: the opportunity to choose.

The absolute must lead my life, what is the use of it otherwise? What could be the use of intelligence?

Where are the firm foundations so that I may take a rest in them? Where is their Root? Where are You? I want to fall in love with You, because You are the only way which will give me full happiness. I shall find the peace I need in You, your wonderful peace free of death smell... I agree with Saint Augustine: You wake him up (man) so that he enjoys praising you, for You made us for You, and our heart will feel uneasy until we rest in You.

However, you don't speak. If only I could hear your call... Please, speak, talk to me and I'll be saved!

Which is the way to You? I shall follow it quickly, and I shall never again take a false step.

I must see!!!

VII

I need fullness, a tranquil fullness actually. Whoever is nervous gets tired very quickly...

In this world, on the contrary, still water stinks, and it is the same with any still thing...

I was very confident before, when I said one had to walk; I said it was true in this world because it didn't fill us. Now, I wouldn't say it so gladly, I hesitate. To walk is tiring... Isn't the noise blinding us instead of filling us?

There's no possible appeasement in this world. What it offers is always transferable and fleeting; and is peace possible in that mad-denying movement? No.

I see it clearly now: the world can't fill up our emptiness, and this can be demonstrated rationally. It's enough to analyse the world coldly, and our manner.

In a word, if there was not another life, we would be irretrievably lost.

VIII

Is any faith worth as much as another? No. Every way has a limit. Which could take us then to our true objective?

If we talk to someone, we always consider him right, and he really speaks as if he were right. The others always happen to be wrong, the others are the blinded by pride, the others are the arrogant ones, the others... Everyone affirms his words believing he is right, and such faith becomes very powerful in them, even if they are different.

There are postulates in every faith and philosophy. Whoever takes them into account (whichever the reason) is a Believer; the pitiful proud men, however, are those who despise those intuitive postulates. How will they overcome the abyss between them?

Those who are born in Arabia are Mahommedans all together, similarly those born in Ceylon are Buddhists and the Irish people are Catholics. Why? Because truth

is not what governs man, but value. And these values are not chosen by our minds, but our attitude, our education, our generation, our heart and many other circumstances which lead us to them.

But we have chosen neither that attitude nor that education, that generation nor that heart. Therefore, the absolute we are continuously questioning has been chosen for us by Chance.

We are nothing but toys...

This is terrible to realize, but the power of what has been said is great and it can't be denied. To what point can we say that man is selfpossessed? Can anybody assert that he himself has chosen his absolutes?

We all love our town, and we think it is the most beautiful and the most loveable of all. The same thing happens with politics, and with the mother countries. We are like plants: we love the piece of ground on which we have fallen.

Yes, we are like plants...

Someone born here loves this place, and justifies whatever happens here; he would also give his life to defend what is his. Not blindly, but because he thinks he is completely right.

This is what happened with the wars, as history proves: all soldiers have thought they were fighting for Truth and Justice, and the future generations will think the same thing. (At least those who went to fight willingly).

What happens with love in relation to this is amazing: we all find the woman of our dreams in our respective towns. Jon was right (at least before he began with Lore...)

Therefore, the absolutes are very relative. Actually, one can say that there is no absolute: it is absolutely legitimate to assert this.

Something similar occurs with every science. Once Euclid's postulates denied, if Mathematics take a different way, they will also reach logical conclusions. In Philosophy, if one starts from different premises, one will get to different places, and always despite great efforts of mind and will. Same thing in Arts: those born in a certain period don't express it in the same way as those of the precedent periods, and this must be so, mostly in this field.

Therefore, it seems no actual choice is conceivable, and the person who will be able to choose without trouble has never been born, and will never be born. Only God owns the possibility of a purely logical choice and man is wasting his time in trying to do what is God's.

Actually, where is that purity? How can I know what the truth is?

We all testify to our faith, but we are not aware of it most of the time. Nothing can be demonstrated up to its very first origins, one always comes across the postulates somewhere.

Nothing can be proved.

After choosing, on the contrary, all the absolutes can be justified.

God, where shall I arrive?

One must walk, even knowing that he walk itself won't fill us; and one has to walk blindly, with the only consolation an «a posteriori» discovery about the chosen way. Though one doesn't see, one must believe, and link one's life to that faith. Without faith, no progress in this confirmation is allowed.

What is, then, a more sensible and more human practice than faith?

All men confess this blindness because we can never see clearly and precisely enough.

This is how I explain today the significance of the way and the need for faith, not as confronted with man, but as linked to the essence of man.

But which faith? Anyone? Which way? Which absolute?

IX

I don't like the end of the «Story of St Michel»: after feeling anguish at death through the whole book, Munthe seems to consider his end as a silly thing, and I think he comes out of the atmosphere of the book.

Death is the basis of the legend, and I am not the only man who thinks about death, even if it is quite hard to believe as one looks at the smiling faces in the world.

Death puts life at the level of the Absolute, and from this point of view, I think it increases its value instead of diminishing it. It transforms the opportunity offered by our birth into a single and permanent gift, the way we shan't cover twice, the substance that only nourishes us once.

It limits our time, urging the doers on.

It attracts us, and its atmosphere is beautiful. Though it is the most frightening thing, it seems to know what a soft embrace is. A simple poetry flows around it, and more than once I've stopped in front of the gravestones

full of curiosity, wondering perhaps, as someone watching the world from outside... And I've thought men mad, and their doubts and worries completely foreign.

The peacefulness inherent to cemeteries has always upset me. It is a sharp peace, and it penetrates us to the core. Why does what we precisely need worry us so much? We want silence, and the total silence of uninhabited place terrifies us; we need them in our sleep, even when we see it on someone else. The stillness of the dead creates in us an irresistible desire to escape.

Despite this, the cemetery moves me more than the city, certainly because the graveyard belongs more to me... Yes, its worrying peace is closer to us than the pseudo-liveliness of the streets.

The usual!

The nervous movements of the «Boulevard» are carnivals and costume parties to me. Where are they going? Where do they come from? To move... To nick... To dream... Silly dreams because there is nothing to worry about... How quickly has it forgotten its creator!

Life... Impatience, first... And, finally, the end... The period of illness...

What for so much trouble and pain? «Perhaps for fear of what comes after death».

One must walk: there's no possible happiness without struggle. True. But I prefer the silent peacefulness of «St Germain des Prés». I've been sitting there, next to the old church, watching the afternoon go by, and



I've been happy in my want. What is the name of the small square behind? I can never remember the name of that oasis of peace. It sounds like German. I don't know. It's very small, but really big enough for the heart. Don't go to see it: there's nothing to be seen.

Instead of filling me, I empty myself there.

And I prefer this because the sadness of emptiness makes me more able to find the truth.

X

Again in the park, as always: today in «Buttes Chaumont».

I hardly progress lately: I've reached the reign of darkness, and I can't see.

One always accepts the pre-absolutes. It is impossible to start from nothing, and later, slowly, to start building without a break. One must always jump at the beginning: we may call this first step «intuition», or whatever we like. The name doesn't matter.

Yes, our mind is our torch, but it is given to us on an island, in the middle of the night, and we have to cross the ocean so as to use it on dry land. And if we don't want it to go out, we must jump first with no other alternative than to hold it high. A terrible jump, really!

Man has no real choice as for the truth: it can't be a full choice. We are not capable of it. To swim across the surrounding sea without fear, we would need a powerful fire so that it couldn't go out, but we have only a torch.

One has to resign oneself: we can't reach the truth unless we start with a jump. And we ourselves are not able to take that necessary step.

Whom shall we call?

Besides, though this has been much preached, the truth is not what man desires most, but happiness. The truth is a way towards it, not the goal. Undoubtedly, the desire for happiness is more vivid than the yearning for the truth. Who can deny it?

But, our mind works by slowing down and securing everything. It is unable to understand life, and it prefers the lifeless because it manages better. «The intellect loves the dead» said Unamuno.

Its essence refuses emotion, because it can't analyse it, and after refusing emotion, it denies its importance finally to deny its existence itself. Not because it is not important but because we can't assume our weakness.

But if happiness is something at all, it is emotion. Therefore, the mind stays away from happiness. It stays at the limit of the soul.

This is to say that we always accept postulates, consciously or unconsciously, and we are unable to reach the whole truth. On the other hand, the truth which can be grasped by the mind has no connection with happiness. Why do I have such a weak mind to lead me? Why my main power if it stands against me?

One must accept its weakness.

One must limit its territory.

Otherwise, let my pride swallow me.

XI

«Oi, zein den ituna
Behera-behar hau!
Nik ez nahi eguna
Bihurtzerik gau.» (Lizardi)

(Oh, how sad this inevitable decay is!
I don't want the day to become night.)

Once the ruin of man known, how couldn't we love him? The weeks are passing but I haven't stepped forward.

I feel I'm progressing but I can't see my way. All my efforts seem to become an escape from myself. I realize that my Paris period is coming to an end, and I would like to stop time because the only thing which has been given to man might slip away with it.

I see myself as someone far away would see me, wandering the streets of the city, in my memory I see all the short and fleeting moments I've lived here embellished by time, and dressed in strange touches of poetry.

And I want to hold it all, frightened; and more than once I've grasped the iron banister or anything near because I was shaken by a strange giddiness.

Meanwhile... I'm a blind traveller going from one darkness to another darkness.

Yesterday I dreamt awake. I was standing on the stairs of the «Sacré Coeur», and I remained there until late. In front of me, far away, the bright sea of Paris, and above it the sea of the sky, also shining. A big meeting of glow-worms above and below. Behind me, the crown of the long stairs: the famous white church so many times criticized, shining in light. A unique sight, really!

There were many young people sitting on the large stairs, and not so young too, and I did the same as them. In front of me, in a row, the Bohemians or whatever they were, kept up a nice show: songs, poems, playing the guitar or the trumpet: we saw all sorts of thongs. We also had a young couple performing a strange dance.

I shall never forget that special and joyful atmosphere.

As suddenly as they appeared, the young people went towards Montmartre and the spectators also rose. Quite sad, actually... but very pleased.

The bright sea of Paris remained as still as ever in front of the stairs, like the warm ash of a distant enormous forge.

Upstairs, all kinds of tourists were making their way towards Montmartre across the narrow streets after a look at the church.

It was dark.

Everything was a lightning to me.

XII

We have a candle to light the way towards the truth, and the wood we have to cross is a wild and drowned jungle.

Though our candle is not useless, it is insufficient. If we rise too high, we can see a larger part of the jungle, true; but we're trapped in a terrible darkness. If we don't rise, on the contrary, we see much clearer; but what is there outside its boundaries? The torch of the mind only lights up nearby; at a certain distance, it cedes to the darkness little by little, not even illuminating a leaf.

Once the way chosen, our little light is a great help for us; or sufficient to know the surroundings... Too insignificant to lighten the whole world.

Then, what am I looking for, oh fool that I am, with this candle in the terrible jungle? I shall only waste my time, like all those who have wasted it before me, and I shan't get further than them in the search for truth. Shall

I take into account their failure? I can't find it: my light is too weak.

Who am I then? How was I born? I've come to the world by accident, my parents knew each other by chance, and so on up to Adan. And after my birth, Chance has guided me up to now, and I could have died hundreds of times. And if I had died, no one would have noticed my absence, for I am nobody, only the son of a pure accident.

You, who don't believe it, learn the origin of life, and you'll be frightened when you know its complexity, and amazed when you analyze the origin of your existence. I really meant it: people come to the world by miracle.

And I, accident that I am, why am I surprised at being unable to choose? If it was the other way round (that is to say, my being able to choose a belief knowing the whole truth) it would be still more amazing. Because I am solely, completely and totally a product of Chance.

And what is it then that my mind proudly asks for? To choose the so-called truth after having seen everything one by one from the very middle. But I ask again, who am I to be in the middle? Why should all the creatures be my slaves?

Why should I be king among the rest?

A choice... I can't choose!

Besides, the pride of the person who chooses is disgusting because he wants to make slaves of the others.

Therefore, my old wish to choose is impossible and hateful.

And that was the root of man to me?

XIII

I was amazed when I got home today: I found a letter from Miren on the bed. I recognized it by the writing.

I opened it quickly, and I read:

«My love:

I can't go to fetch you. I need you Joxeba. Don't stay any longer, please. I know you will receive this letter. If you don't come back to me, I shall die. Don't ask me how I know where you are. You will always be my love. Good bye, my dear, good bye!»

Her writing is shaky, and its content shorter than usual.

All the sentences have penetrated me to the bowels. Poor Miren! Desperate because of me, fallen into the hell of ice because of me. Your call has deeply shaken me, and I've realized I still love you.

Love? Yes, Miren, I still love you.

I was very cruel to you when I pretended not to hear the voice of my heart.

And in my madness I used to say I had dominated it.
All the contrary, my pride dominated me.

I, I, I. This is the problem: I was the only one to be
taken into account.

But, who am I? Nobody but myself.

And, poor Miren, grieved because of me.

How foolish I was!!

XIV

Knowledge leads nowhere, but to its impossibility.

But, where the sentiments?

The sentiment doesn't listen, it demands. Its throne is in the heart, and this tickles us with the desire for happiness, becoming our instigator. It only knows about happiness and misfortune; and that single sentiment is more helpful than we think to classify our values.

It request love to reach happiness. Its language is the language of love (let us look at women) and it finds the greatest and the most gratifying pleasures in love: the pleasure to love and the pleasure to create.

And what is love? To give oneself, to forget oneself, to get out from oneself. To let someone choose us.

If the mind wants to choose under the condition of our standing in the middle of everything, the sentiment on the contrary wants to offer ourselves. Their behaviour, therefore, is completely different.

But if I have been led by accident and by chance up to now, which of them is best for man? The first one

takes us for Gods, the second, on the contrary, for individuals, therefore, the latter is much nearer the real truth than the other.

And the love-law fills us much more than the helpless effort of our empty mind to find the truth.

Love has led me since the day I was born. My present values aren't the consequence of a choice made according to the truth, but as I said the consequence of a choice made according to the truth, but as I said the other day, a choice according to my inclinations and education. Why? Because instead of making my choice I have been chosen.

All this is due to the influence of our yearning for happiness.

A great philosopher was very right when he said something like: what is the contemplation of the beauty of the firmament if it doesn't help us in love?

Instead of «Who is my Servant?», I must ask «Whose Servant am I?». This is the solution.

And if anybody condemned the dog because he loves the master who has fallen to him, who would punish the man because of his love for the one who has chosen him? Without a doubt, he has vindicated himself through his love.

But, intelligence? It is a perishable candle.

Then, I'm the servant of the one who needs me. No matter why he needs me; in fact, if he needs me I'm in debt to him presently, and I must offer my help to him.

I'm a servant since birth. Besides, I'm not an abstract servant, but a very concrete one; for I'm the servant of my people. And who are those «my»? Those that God put near me.

Could God really deny me because of my feeling so?

Behaving like this, I shall be happy, and I shall pay off my debts, and those I serve by myself will be glad.

First, those who need me, and then those who need anybody's help: these are my masters and lords.

Thus, *I shall lie low and humble myself, and I shall do nothing but what is up to my condition.*

Unfortunately, God doesn't speak; but the needy speak for him, or He speaks through them. Theirs is a love-call, and it seems to me God himself is calling me though I can't tell why.

To love is better than to know. It is better and more suitable.

And, truth?

I can't reach it as a whole. As a matter of fact, is it little to have acknowledge the existence of God with the help of a small candle?.

XV

Miren needs me, my country needs me, my people need me. I'm theirs, and I'm nothing without them.

Now, having realized this, I must live for them. I don't know where I should put my share. Is it possible to say «by myself». I'm what time has made of me, nothing else. Now, and unable to retreat again, they've got me, and one can say I was born for them.

And without my «today», my «yesterday», and my «here», I'm nothing, only a funny and sad invention.

I don't care about how or why I've become what I am. I'm this, I'm theirs, and my efforts are taking me to them.

Denying my mind, I finally get in the way. Up the heart!

I'm going to Altzurain.

Don't give up, Miren. I'm coming back to you for ever, and I shall ask you to forgive me with all my

heart. Forgive me, Miren! Forgive me, my God! The sin
of my pride has been terrible.

Good by, wonderful city!

Good bye!

XVI

I'm back in Altzurain. The following will be very short.

It is as if I were mad. I found Miren in bed, half dead I think. Her face dark blue and her eyes lost in terrible sockets. What is wrong with her? I don't know yet. When I arrived, everybody moved away from me, and disdainful, nobody in the room spoke a word. They all hate me.

Miren has recognized me as soon as I came in; but not by sight, because even though she looked she couldn't recognize me. Actually, one can say that she felt it was me.

She's asked me to approach, her sight, her sight is very weakened, and she told me smiling: «I see you now... My dear Joxeba... I knew... I couldn't go to meet you... you still love me... You have not come moved by pity...»

And she coughed as if she were suffocating.

I asked her to rest and not to speak to me; and after a soft and moving kiss on the forehead, I left the room.

As I went out, the same accusing leers, and not a word.

I ran to the doctor's.

Repentance presses me to the point of exhaustion.

XVII

I've been with doctor Uriarte: he says there's nothing to be done. Miren can't recover.

I'm so distressed I'm ready to do any foolish thing. Oppressive weather. Headache. Weariness. Loss of appetite. Everything wet by cold sweat. Warm because I feel, but cold at the same time. People say nobody died dreaming, but I'm dying like in a dreamsnow.

Excepting my wish to die, everything seems a dream to me.

The anguish in me is such taht I can't express it. This must be a lie. It can't be true. Miren!! Dying!!

My knees are strangely weak, and my whole self is shaking.

I'm guilty, yes. She's fallen so ill because of me perhaps; maybe my harshness has killed her. And my repentance comes too late. If only I had been here...

No, please! I musn't think that. This would mean I am her murderer. And I have not been a murderer to her. No, God, I beg you! It would be too cruel...

The sun hides in the bright golden sea. I've never seen such a farewell as this one today. How beautiful! How admirable! You're not though for me...

I'm going to the monastery of Ibarluze. Yes, it is far but no obstacle could stop me today. I shall leave at once before it is dark. I'm going to see Father Damaso: he has succeeded in curing strange illnesses with herbs, and at least I shall try. I hope I shall be able to make the way across the rough cliffs in the mountains.

Good bye!

I'm frightened. I would like to pray. To whom, though, faithless brute that I am?

September 30th, 1956. What a memorable day! It has been a long time since I felt this need: to pray.

God: I've never denied you. You can help me in this distress.

Though I can't see you, I do see my fault. The proud anguish to choose took me out of my way. Forgive me. Speak to me, please, and I shan't lose myself in darkness again.

Cure Miren. She deserves this and more. I, nothing.

If I saw you clearly, I would willingly serve you. To love the others, the need for charity. The thirst for God is a feasible life, when we are unable to reach the truth...

These are the truths I've discovered in my search for You.

If Miren should live...

I shall clean my faults with love. With love... with love... Who was always talking about love? I'm afraid to say it: Jesus Christ!

Are you really «Truth and Life»? I didn't believe it, but I was very close to you. If only I had Known this... Cure Miren and Kill me. Not for me but for pity on her ruin, do cure Miren. I don't but she believes in You with all her heart. Please, God!

If only I could go on with this reflection-prayer tomorrow. I must go, unfortunately, when small shafts of light start to light my wounded soul.

Will this fever show me the real way? Maybe absolute distress?

I might shed light on this tomorrow, when I come back from Ibarluze...

Do live, Miren. I'm prepared to give up my life for you. I'm totally your servant. I really mean it.

And even if you should take it, I wouldn't completely clear my fault, because I've killed you.

Good bye, my dear Altzurain!

Why am I crying?

NOTE OF THE COMPILER:

Here ends the moving diary of the unfortunate Leturia. What happened to him after this? Perhaps we shall never know.

But a little time later, the «Altzuraingo Deiak» gave this news item:

November 10th.

The body of a man has been found in the cave of Imirioz. Everything indicates that he has fallen from the cliff, and the doctors say the body has been there for ten days.

The man probably got lost in the storm of September the thirtieth. It's been impossible to identify the man for the moment».

It was certainly Leturia, because our poor Joxeba was never seen again.

After I knew the story of Joxeba, I went to see Altzurain. And everything was familiar to me. I was not a stranger, not completely.

I've seen Zerubide. Everything remains the same...

The noise of Alzurain like a distant echo... The wonderful trees, the nervous winds... The peacefulness... The fountain was also there, hidden, lonely... The children running gladly: the beginning. The old people bent: the end!... The jet flowing continuously...

And I walk peacefully and slowly towards the observation point... The silence, and I listen to my walk: step, step, step, step, step...

And suddenly an impression, and my fright:

«Step, step... We're still alive...»

In front of me, quiet, blue, bright, wide, the sea...
The eternal limitless ocean.

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