



**EL ENGAÑO**  
**THE DECEPTION**  
**EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN**







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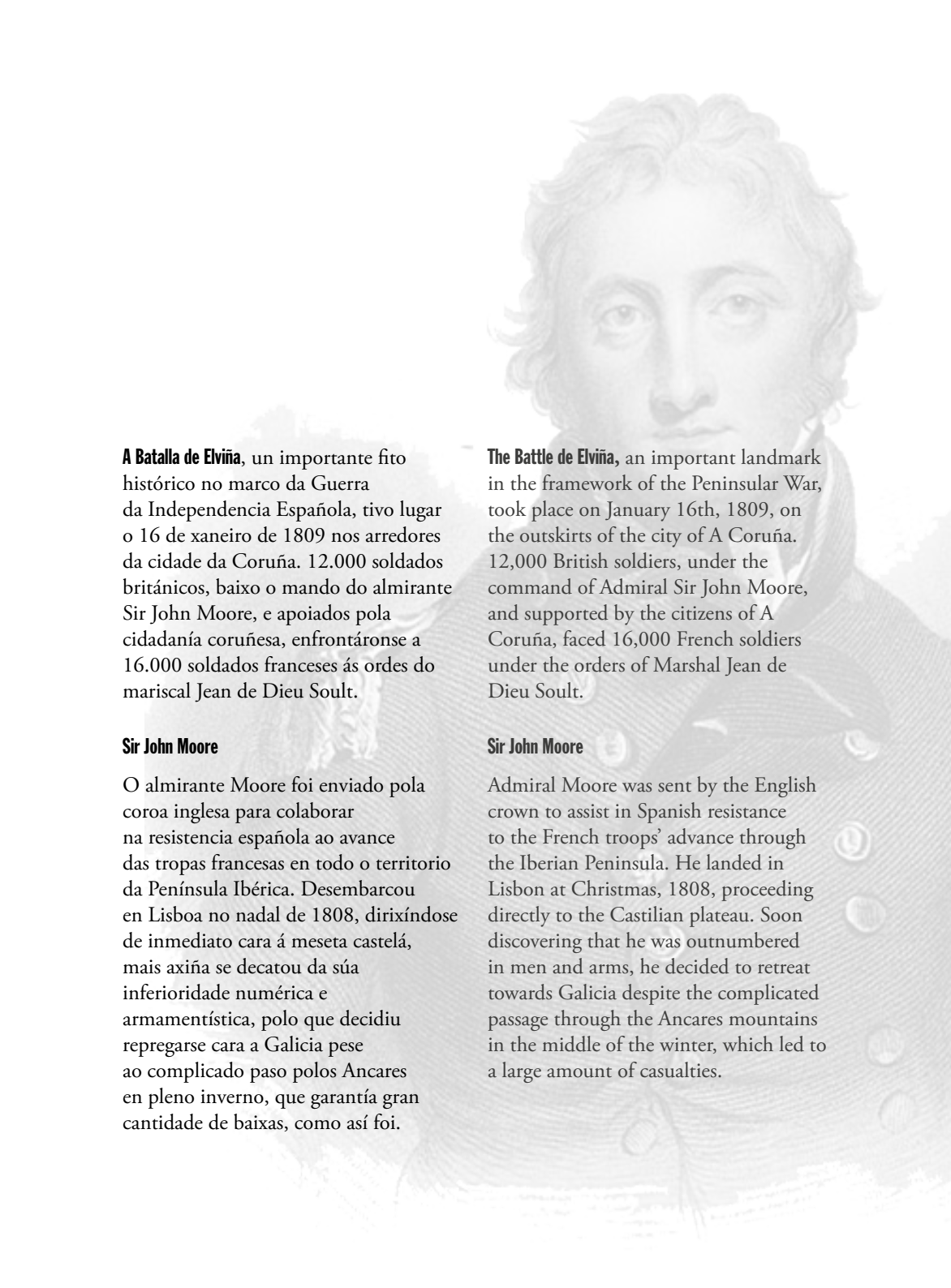
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**A Batalla de Elviña**, un importante fito histórico no marco da Guerra da Independencia Española, tivo lugar o 16 de xaneiro de 1809 nos arredores da cidade da Coruña. 12.000 soldados británicos, baixo o mando do almirante Sir John Moore, e apoiados pola cidadanía coruñesa, confrontáronse a 16.000 soldados franceses ás ordes do mariscal Jean de Dieu Soult.


### **Sir John Moore**

O almirante Moore foi enviado pola coroa inglesa para colaborar na resistencia española ao avance das tropas francesas en todo o territorio da Península Ibérica. Desembarcou en Lisboa no nadal de 1808, dirixíndose de inmediato cara á meseta castelá, mais axiña se decatou da súa inferioridade numérica e armamentística, polo que decidiu repregarse cara a Galicia pese ao complicado paso polos Ancares en pleno inverno, que garantía gran cantidade de baixas, como así foi.

**The Battle de Elviña**, an important landmark in the framework of the Peninsular War, took place on January 16th, 1809, on the outskirts of the city of A Coruña. 12,000 British soldiers, under the command of Admiral Sir John Moore, and supported by the citizens of A Coruña, faced 16,000 French soldiers under the orders of Marshal Jean de Dieu Soult.

### **Sir John Moore**

Admiral Moore was sent by the English crown to assist in Spanish resistance to the French troops' advance through the Iberian Peninsula. He landed in Lisbon at Christmas, 1808, proceeding directly to the Castilian plateau. Soon discovering that he was outnumbered in men and arms, he decided to retreat towards Galicia despite the complicated passage through the Ancares mountains in the middle of the winter, which led to a large amount of casualties.



O 11 de xaneiro chegou á Coruña. Previamente, ao longo da súa desesperada fuxida, dinamitou varias pontes, entre elas a ponte do Burgo, e mesmo considerou prenderlle lume á vila de Betanzos co fin de gañar un tempo imprescindible para que a operación de rescate da Mariña Real Británica, dirixida polo almirante Hood, fose posible.

As vinte pezas de artillería francesas non chegaron á cidade ata o día 15, con todo as tropas de infantaría e cabalería de Soult evitaron que os británicos fosen quen de embarcar. Moore, pese ao reforzo da artillería coruñesa, non tivo posibilidade de defender a cidade por carecer esta de fortificacións axeitadas, de aí que saíu ao encontro dos franceses nos altos do monte de Santa Margarida, no monte Mero e voando a polvoreira do Penasquedo na Zapateira.

A batalla comezou o día 16; os franceses sitúan no Penasquedo a súa artillería e os ingleses no monte Mero, polo que o pobo de Elviña se converteu nun obxectivo militar.

Ao rematar o día, as baixas eran de preto dun milleiro por cada bando, entre eles o propio Moore. Ferido nun brazo por unha bala de canón, finou desangrado esa noite na casa do comerciante Genaro Fontenla, sita no número 16 do Cantón Grande, hoxe desaparecida. Foi soterrado esa mesma noite, envolto na bandeira británica, no baluarte de San Carlos.

On January 11th, he arrived in A Coruña. Previously, during his desperate flight, he dynamited several bridges (including the one at O Burgo), and even considered setting fire to the town of Betanzos in order to gain essential time to enable the rescue operation by the Royal Navy, led by Admiral Hood.

The twenty pieces of French artillery did not reach the city until January 15th. Nevertheless, Soult's infantry and cavalry prevented the British from embarking. In spite of the reinforcement by the Coruña artillery, Moore could not defend the city because of a lack of adequate fortifications. This led to the encounter with the French forces on Santa Margarita ridge, at the River Mero and taking fire from the Penasquedo peak at Zapateira hill.

The battle started on the January 16th; the French located their artillery on Penasquedo and the English at Mero. That is why the village of Elviña became a military objective.

At the end of the day, the casualties were about one thousand on each side, including Moore himself. His arm was wounded by a cannonball and he died that night at the now vanished house of the merchant Genaro Fontenla, located at, 16, Cantón Grande. He was buried that same night, wrapped in the British flag, in the bastion of San Carlos.

Á alba do día 17 os franceses ocuparon o alto de Santa Margarida e ao longo do día tomaron o castelo de San Diego, posibilitando disparar contra os barcos ingleses namentres partían.

Na cidade quedaron un reducido número de milicianos que impediron a entrada dos franceses durante unhas horas. Finalmente o día 18, Soult e o seu exército entraron na cidade pola Porta da Torre de Abaixo, hoxe convertida na Praza de Ourense, e entrevistábase no Palacio de Capitanía co xeneral Alcedo, gobernador da cidade.

Asinouse a capitulación o 19 de xaneiro de 1809. A finais de xuño de 1809, os franceses abandonan A Coruña e Galicia. A importante colonia de franceses que existía na cidade, así como os coruñeses sospeitosos de ser afrancesados, serán obxecto, desde ese intre, de continuas agresións por parte do pobo. O 31 de xullo son cercadas varias casas, e as autoridades, para poñer a salvo as persoas, deciden encerralas preventivamente no castelo de Santo Antón, no mosteiro de Santo Domingo e nun barco ancorado na ría.

Pese ao elevado número de baixas, que se cuantifican por miles, este reembarque foi considerado un éxito por parte do bando británico. Por outra banda os franceses tomaron como súa a vitoria tras a expulsión dos británicos. Posiblemente ambos os bandos tiñan razón dando por bo o resultado desta batalla, o que significaría que os únicos perdedores foron os galegos.

At dawn on January 17th, the French occupied the heights of Santa Margarita and throughout the day they took San Diego castle, enabling them to fire on the English ships as they departed.

A small number of militiamen remained in Coruña, preventing the entry of the French for a few hours. Finally, on January 18th, Soult and his army entered the city at what was Porta da Torre de Abaixo, today the Praza de Ourense, and was received at the Palacio de Capitanía by the governor of the city, General Alcedo.

The surrender was signed on January 19th, 1809. At the end of June 1809, the French left A Coruña and Galicia. The important segment of French citizens who resided in the city, as well as those suspected of being pro-French, were subjected from that moment on to continuous hostility from local people. On July 31st, several houses were surrounded. The authorities decided to lock people in Santo Antón Castle, in the monastery of Santo Domingo and in a boat anchored in the ria for their own safety.

In spite of the high number of casualties running into the thousands, this evacuation was considered a success by the British. On the other hand, the French regarded the expulsion of the British as a victory. Both sides may have been correct regarding the result of this battle. That would mean that the only losers were the Galicians.

Por orde do propio mariscal Soult entérrase o almirante Sir John Moore con todas as honras.

Este é o enterramento que veu visitar a protagonista do conto de Emilia Pardo Bazán “El engaño”. Nela quizais a escritora quixo retratar a **Lady Hester Stanhope** (1776-1839).

Contan as crónicas da época que esta nobre británica, sobriña do primeiro ministro William Pitt, viaxaba ata A Coruña todos os 16 de xaneiro, para bicar o que foi o amor da súa vida. Contan tamén que a súa silueta pasea polo xardín de San Carlos, onde xace Moore. Da nada, de súpeto, xorde a misteriosa figura dunha muller elegante, vestida de branco, co rostro cuberto por un gran sombreiro. A súa sombra camiña queda, ata a tumba do seu amado, párase e logo desaparece.

Lady Hester foi unha muller excepcional. Gran viaxeira nunha época na que ás mulleres non se lles permitía ningunha excentricidade. Tras a morte do almirante, embarcou nunha gran aventura; percorreu Oriente, onde pasou os últimos 30 anos da súa vida, converténdose na “raíña do deserto”. Pasou á historia por ser a primeira europea que pisou Damasco, a primeira muller branca que entrou na cidade prohibida de Palmira e a primeira viaxeira que conviviu cos beduínos.

By order of Marshal Soult, Admiral Sir John Moore was buried with full honours.

This is the tomb that the protagonist of Emilia Pardo Bazán’s short story, “The deception”, came to visit. Perhaps the writer wanted to portray **Lady Hester Stanhope** (1776-1839) in that protagonist.

The chronicles of the time tell how this British aristocrat, the niece of Prime Minister William Pitt, travelled to A Coruña every January 16th to kiss the tomb in which the love of her life was buried. It is also said that her silhouette walks through the garden of San Carlos, where Moore lies. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the mysterious figure of an elegant woman emerges, dressed in white, her face covered by a large hat. Her shadow walks gently to the grave of her beloved, pauses and then disappears.

Lady Hester was an exceptional woman. She was a great traveller at a time when women were not permitted any display of eccentricity. After the admiral’s death, she embarked on a great adventure, travelling to the Orient, where she spent the last 30 years of her life, and becoming the “Queen of the desert.” She has gone down in history as the first European to enter Damascus, the first white woman who entered the forbidden city of Palmira and the first traveller to live with the Bedouin.



# EL ENGAÑO

# THE DECEPTION

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

Acababa de fumarme el más sabroso de los cigarros del día, el que fumo meciéndome en el cierre de cristales de mi casa, después de la comida a la española embalsamada la boca por el gusto dominador del café y recreados los ojos por la vista, siempre nueva de la bahía, donde los barcos se cuelan como alciones en su nido; y una pereza deliciosa embargaba mis potencias cuando se entreabrió la *portier* y entró, agitado, mi amigo y consocio en varios círculos. Valentín Beleño. Sólo con mirarle comprendí que algo extraordinario le ocurría. Como yo, Valentín lleva una vida apacible y grata, en llana prosa; despacha su labor oficinesca, da su paseíto higiénico diariamente, conoce al dedillo la chismografía del pueblo de Marineda y ostenta el campeonato del juego de dominó. Comprendo, pues, que el caso será de muerto, o punto menos para que Beleño se propine tal sofoco.

I had just smoked the most delicious cigar of the day, the one I smoke as I rock in the chair beside the windows in my house after a typically Spanish lunch, my mouth embalmed by the overwhelming taste of coffee and my eyes entertained by the ever new prospect of the bay, where the boats sneak in like kingfishers to their nest. A delightful sloth was overpowering my faculties when the *portier* opened halfway, and my friend and associate from several circles appeared, in a state of agitation. Valentín Beleño. I understood that something extraordinary was happening merely by looking at him. Like me, Valentine leads a peaceful and pleasant life that is nothing to write home about; he dispatches his office work, takes his daily constitutional, knows the gossip of the town of Marineda like the back of his hand and holds the championship in the game of dominos. I understand, then, that the matter must be of grave importance or thereabouts for Beleño to be in such a flush.

En palabras picadas, descosidas, me informa. Tiene la culpa de toda esta ganga de viceconsulado que le ha caído encima y le trae atareadísimo, mientras no llega el nuevo cónsul a sustituir al que, envuelto en la bandera inglesa, duerme el sueño sin despertar, en el cementerio disidente, llamado por el vulgo «de los canes». A cada momento necesita Beleño lidiar con pasajeros y viandantes británicos, que desembarcan infaliblemente, aunque sólo dispongan de dos horas para hacerlo.

—¿Y creará usted —añade Beleño— que esos malditos saltan a tierra para refrescar en los cafés o distraerse en el cine? ¡Quiá! La mayor parte de ellos toma un coche y se echa a correr el campo o a admirar los monumentos... ¡Monumentos en Marineda!... ¡Tres o cuatro iglesias de mala muerte y el faro! Y sacan el álbum, abren la boca y dibujan... En fin: ¡para mí, están locos!... El de hoy, que ha venido a bordo del *Blue Star*, no es inglés, sino inglesa —mujer guapa, por cierto! —, y figúrese usted que se empeña en que la he de acompañar a visitar el campo de batalla de Dorantes..., ¡que es una de las manías!...

Al oír lo de «mujer guapa» me eché a reír socarronamente. La señora de Beleño tiene fama de celosa, aun cuando mi amigo Valentín está en sus cuarenta y pico, asaz maduros y sin asomos de gallardía ni de travesura.

In short, clipped words, he brings me up to speed. It is the fault of all this useless bother from the vice-consulate that has befallen him and means that he will be very busy until the new consul arrive and replaces the man who, wrapped in the British flag, lies in that slumber from which he shall never awake in the Dissidents Cemetery, or “the dog’s cemetery”, as it is called by the common herd. Beleño must constantly deal with British passengers and travellers who disembark unfailingly, even if they only have two hours to do so.

“You would think,” adds Beleño, “that those swine come ashore to take refreshment in the cafés or distract themselves at the cinema. Never! Most of them take a car and head to the countryside or to admire monuments... Monuments in Marineda! Three or four nondescript churches and the lighthouse! And then they take out the album, open their mouths and sketch away... In short: They are all quite mad as far as I am concerned! The one who has come aboard the *Blue Star* today is not an Englishman, but an Englishwoman (and a most handsome woman, by the way!), and would you believe that she set on my escorting her to visit the battlefield of Dorantes...? Such are their whims!”

When I heard “handsome woman”, I laughed smugly. Mrs. Beleño has a reputation for being jealous, even though my friend Valentín is exceedingly into his forties and without a hint of gallantry or mischief.

—¿Y usted quiere...? —pregunté, siempre risueño.

—Que venga usted también... Ande, hombre... Como usted ha recorrido esa zona levantando planos, conoce aquello mejor. Yo, a la verdad, dudo hacia dónde cae el dichoso campo de batalla, que Dios confunda.

—Mire usted, Beleño: yo iré, aunque estaba aquí mucho más a gusto; pero, franqueza: confíeseme que no quiere usted desazones en casa y me lleva de pararrayos...

—Bueno; será lo que sea... Ahí tengo el coche, y en él aguarda la inglesita...

—Hombre, deme usted cinco minutos para atusarme.

Y declaro que me atusé con esmero, y hasta eché unas gotas de *Ideal* en el pañuelo de seda marrón, exactamente parejo a la corbata. Cada uno tiene sus pretensiones... No era cosa de parecerle a la inglesita el coco. ¡Oh dolor! Momentos después de sentarme a su lado en el fondo del coche tuve que confesarme a mí mismo que había perdido el tiempo y las gotas de *Ideal*. Hermosa era, en efecto, la extranjera: la albura de su tez, la transparencia de sus pupilas grises, puntilleadas de oro; la abundancia de su pelo sedoso y tan rubio que parecía blanco a la claridad me encantaron; pero la inocente seriedad de sus modales, la indiferencia con que nos miraba sin vernos el exclusivo afán que demostraba por llegar al campo de batalla de Dorantes donde se verificó

“And what do you want...?” I asked, still grinning.

“For you to join us...” “Oh come now, dear chap!” “Since you have been in that area undertaking surveys, you are more familiar with it.” I, if the truth be told, doubt as to where the blessed field of battle exactly lies, confound it.

“Now look, Beleño, I’ll go, although I was much more comfortable here; but be perfectly honest with me: you don’t want any upset at home and are just taking me as a lightning conductor...”

“Well, whatever the reason... I’ve got the car ready and the English miss is in it, waiting ...”

“My dear chap, please give me five minutes to spruce myself up.”

And by Jove, I spruced myself up well, and even put a few drops of *Ideal* on my brown silk scarf, which matched my tie exactly. We all have our own little pretensions... After all, it would simply not do to look like the bogeyman for the English miss. Oh, blast! Moments after sitting down next to her in the back of the car, I had to confess to myself that I had wasted my time and those drops of *Ideal*. The foreigner was, indeed, beautiful: the sapwood of her complexion, her clear, grey pupils, dotted with gold; the abundance of her silken hair, so fair that it seemed white in the light, delighted me; but the innocent seriousness of her manners, the indifference with which she looked at us without revealing the exclusive eagerness with which she wished to visit the battlefield of Dorantes, where

el hecho de armas realizado por tropas de España y de la Gran Bretaña unidas contra el invasor francés, me probaron que la turista no buscaba más guerra que aquélla cuyos recuerdos estaba evocando y que nuestras fatuidades de latinos se estrellaban, insospechadas, en una estricta formalidad anglosajona.

La inglesa declaró que había estado en México dos o tres años por negocios de su marido, y hablaba un español bastante comprensible. Venía con ella un niño, su hijo, choto fuerte y saludable, de ojos puros y labios en flor, que no se hartaba de mirar el camino que recorriamos. Y es que el camino lo merecía: a la izquierda, la ría, azul y brillante, como polvareda de cristal, con sus playales de arena blanca, que orlan pinos y alisos, mimbraleras y álamos argentados; a la derecha, una sarta caprichosa de casas de recreo, de cuyas tapias se desbordaba el ramaje de las coníferas y los ramilletes coralinos del geranio enredadera y la rosa de pitimini. Pensábamos Valentín y yo exactamente lo mismo: que si la inglesa se contentase con este paseo delicioso, se lo agradeceríamos de todas veras. Lo malo era que no cesaba de preguntar por el campo de batalla, que renegado él sea, amén, toda vez que para llegar a pisarlo necesitábamos internarnos por tierras de labor, escalar un cerro empinado y, en suma, andar cerca de tres kilómetros por mal piso, bajo un sol picón, con calzado impropio de tales faenas y pies mal cuidados, no dispuestos para la marcha. No hubo remedio: llegó el momento de

the feat of arms by troops of Spain and Great Britain united against the French invader was proven, confirmed that the tourist sought no other war than that whose memories she was evoking, and that our Latin fatuities were being dashed unsuspectedly by strict Anglo-Saxon formality.

The Englishwoman stated that she had been in Mexico for two or three years on account of her husband's affairs, and spoke a fairly comprehensible Spanish. A child was coming with her, her son, a strong and healthy boy with pure eyes and full lips, who never tired of gazing at the road upon which we travelled. The road was indeed deserving of such attention: to the left, the ría, blue and bright, like a crystal cloud of dust, with its stretches of white sand beaches lined with pines and alders, willows and silvered poplars; to the right, a whimsical string of holiday homes, from whose walls overflowed the branches of the conifers and the coralline clusters of the climbing geranium and the pitimini rose. Valentín and I thought exactly alike: we would be most appreciative if the English miss were satisfied with this delightful outing. The trouble was that she did not stop asking about the battlefield, damn the blasted thing, for to be able to set foot upon it, we needed to go over farmland, climb a steep hill and, in short, walk about three kilometres on uneven ground, under a fierce sun, with improper footwear for such tasks and poorly shod feet, quite unsuitable for walking. There was no alternative: it

bajarse de la cómoda cesta y arremeter con la cuesta en dirección a Dorantes, siendo yo el guía y *cicerone*.

—¿Algún antepasado de usted tomó parte en la batalla? —no pude menos de exclamar, nervioso ya ante el interés de la turista.

—¡Oh! Todos los ingleses que ahí combatieron eran antepasados míos —declaró ella con gracia—. Cuando un inglés ha peleado por Inglaterra, los demás ingleses le creemos nuestro antepasado. ¿Verdad, Edward?

Y el rubio choto contestó flemáticamente:

—*Yes, mother.*

Seguimos trepando. Valentín Beleño sudaba y cojeaba. La viajera, animosa, andaba al paso largo e igual de una mujer bien formada, que calza holgadamente y usa ropa corta. Se me acercó Beleño y me interrogó con disimulo:

—¿Falta mucho para Dorantes?

—Kilómetro y medio —respondí, en igual tono.

—No estaremos de vuelta en casa, ni a las ocho... Yo voy reventando... ¡Demontres de chiflados estos ingleses!...

—¿Y qué le hacemos?

—¡Bah!, muy sencillo... Deles usted la batalla, ahí en ese primer grupo de árboles...

En efecto, al avistar el manchón de castaños y el altozano que detrás aparece, me detuve y exclamé:

—Aquí fue donde...

Se paró la inglesa, y con instintivo recelo murmuró:

was time to alight from the comfortable chaise and attack the slope in the direction of Dorantes, being I both guide and *cicerone*.

“Did any ancestor of yours take part in the battle?” I could but exclaim, nervous already before the curiosity of the tourist.

“Oh! All the Englishmen who fought there were my ancestors,” she graciously declared. “When an Englishman has fought for England, we other Englishmen believe him to be our ancestor. Isn’t that true, Edward?”

And the fair child answered phlegmatically:

“Yes, mother.”

We continued to climb. Valentín Beleño was perspiring and hobbling along. The spirited traveller took long strides and in the manner of a shapely woman wearing comfortable footwear and short clothes. Beleño came up to me and furtively asked:

“Is it a long way to Dorantes?”

“Half a kilometre,” I replied, in the same tone.

“We won’t be back home even by eight... I’m worn out... What devilish crackpots these English are!”

“But what shall do we do?”

“Bah! It’s very simple... Give them the battle, there in that first group of trees...”

Indeed, when I spotted the patch of chestnut trees and the hill behind it, I stopped and exclaimed:

“It was here where...”

The Englishwoman stopped, and with instinctive suspicion muttered:



—¿Aquí? Es extraño. Usted sabe que los franceses se atrincheraron en una ermita. ¿Y la ermita, señor?

Confuso, y arrastrado a la mentira por la fuerza de la mentira, balbucí:

—¿La ermita? La derribaron..., sí; la derribaron... hace poco...

—¡Oh! —gritó, dolorida, ella—. ¡La derribaron! ¡Muy mal hecho! De modo que aquí...

—Sí, aquí mismo..., donde crece ese laurel...

La casualidad había colocado allí un laurel magnífico, ya añoso, de los que parecen regados con sangre, aunque sólo los riegue el agua de la lluvia. El laurel disipó las últimas dudas de la bella viajera.

—Tú, recoge unas hojas, Edward —ordenó al chico, que, sacando reluciente cortaplumas, segó una ramilla del laurel gigante y se la guardó en el pecho—. Ahora, tú, besa el suelo, Edward —añadió la madre.

Y el chico se inclinó, se bajó, convencido y obediente, y apoyó su boca sana y ricamente dentada, incontaminada de tabaco, en el musgo del pradillo.

Una hora después regresábamos a la ciudad. Poníase el sol... No sé por qué, me acometió vaga tristeza. Acaso era remordimiento de haber engañado a un alma creyente; acaso la intuición confusa de que el alma engañada vale más que la mía.

“Here? That’s strange. You know that the French were entrenched in a hermitage. And the hermitage, sir?”

Confused, and drawn to lie by dint of the lie, I babbled:

“The hermitage? Why, they knocked it down... Yes. They knocked it down... Not long ago...”

“Oh!” she cried, upset. “They knocked it down! What a poor show! So, here...”

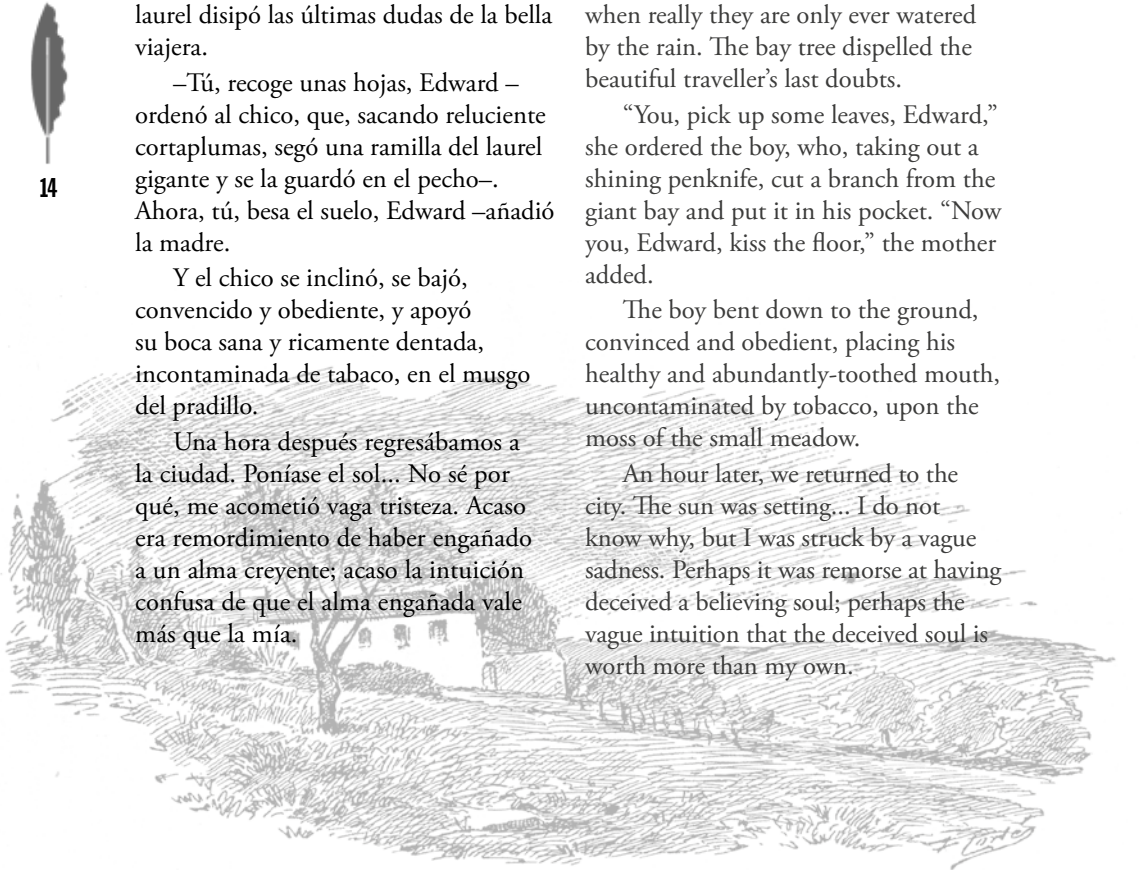
“Yes, right here... Where that bay tree is...”

Chance had placed there a magnificent and now aged bay, of the type that seems nourished on blood, when really they are only ever watered by the rain. The bay tree dispelled the beautiful traveller’s last doubts.

“You, pick up some leaves, Edward,” she ordered the boy, who, taking out a shining penknife, cut a branch from the giant bay and put it in his pocket. “Now you, Edward, kiss the floor,” the mother added.

The boy bent down to the ground, convinced and obedient, placing his healthy and abundantly-toothed mouth, uncontaminated by tobacco, upon the moss of the small meadow.

An hour later, we returned to the city. The sun was setting... I do not know why, but I was struck by a vague sadness. Perhaps it was remorse at having deceived a believing soul; perhaps the vague intuition that the deceived soul is worth more than my own.







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