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Paul Horgan

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: XVIth-CENTURY SPAIN

WHERE THE PUEBLO of San Juan sat on the bank of the Rio Grande del Norte in upper New Mexico, the valley was wide, with many grand steps in the land rising away from the river. The land rose through river terraces of pinkish sand, and Indian-colored foothills carved by the wind into fantastic shapes, and high flat mesas, to mountains whose forests turned the clear air blue as smoke. Here on August 19, 1598, the followers of Captain-General and Governor Juan de Oñate arrived to stay.

The colonists brought more than their lashed and lumbering cargoes to the capital high on the river's course, more than their toiling bodies. They brought all that had made them, through the centuries. If their heritage was a collective memory, it remembered for all more than any one man could know for himself. It shone upon their inner lives in another light than the light of the material world, and in countless hidden revelations suggested what brought them where they were.

Brown plains and wide skies joined by far mountains would always be the image of home, the image of Spain, that rose like a castle to inland heights from the slopes of the Mediterranean, and gave to the offshore wind the fragrance of ten thousand wildflowers that mariners smelled out at sea.

The home of the Spanish spirit was Rome. When Spain was a province of the Caesarean Empire her promising youths went to Rome, to make a name for themselves, to refresh the life of the capital with the raw sweetness of the country, and to help form the styles of the day in the theatre, like Seneca of Cordoba, and make wit acid as wine, like Martial of Bilbilis, and elevate the

public art of speech, like Quintillian from Calahorra, and even become Emperor, like Trajan, the Spanish soldier. Rome gave the Spaniards their law; their feeling for cliff and wall, arch and cave, in building; and their formal display of death in the arena, with its mortal delights, its cynical esthetic of pain and chance. Martial said it:

*Raptus abit media quod ad aethera taurus harena,
non fuit hoc artis sed pietatis opus. . . .*

A bull, he said, taken up from the center of the arena rises to the skies, and this was not act of art, but of piety. . . . It remained an act of passion, for Spanish piety turned elsewhere when Rome gave the world Christianity.

It was an empowering piety that grew through fourteen centuries, the last eight of which made almost a settled condition of life out of war with the Moslems of the Spanish peninsula. It was war both holy and political, striving to unify belief and territory. Like all victors the Spaniards bore lasting marks of the vanquished. Perhaps in the Moors they met something of themselves, long quiet in the blood that even before Roman times flowed in Spanish veins from Africa and the East, when the ancient Phoenicians and the Carthaginians voyaged the Latin sea and touched the Spanish shore and seeded its life. From the Moslem enemy in the long strife came certain arts—numbers, the mathematics of the sky, the art of living in deserts, and the virtue of water for pleasure, in fountains, running courses and tiled cascades. That had style: to use for useless pleasure in an arid land its rarest element.

Hardly had they made their home kingdom secure than the Spaniards put themselves and their faith across the world. They fought the infidel wherever they could find him, they ranged toward the Turk, and the Barbary Coast, and for them an admiral mercenary in 1492 risked sailing west until he might fall over the edge of the world and be lost. But however mockingly he

was called a man of dreams, like many such he was a genius of the practical, and as strong in his soul as in his heart; for he believed as his employers believed.

They believed in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son their Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. They believed in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen, they said.

So believing, it was a divine company they kept in their daily habit, all, from the monarch to the beggar, the poet to the butcher. The Holy Family and the saints inhabited their souls, thoughts and words. They believed that with the love of God, nothing failed; without it, nothing prospered. Fray Juan of the Cross said it for them:

*Buscando mis amores,
Iré por esos montes y riberas,
No cogeré las flores,
Ni temeré las fieras,
Y pasaré los fuertes y fronteras.*

Thus seeking their love across mountain and strand, neither gathering flowers nor fearing beasts, they would pass fortress and frontier, able to endure all because of their strength of spirit in the companionship of their Divine Lord.

Such belief existed within the Spanish not as a compartment where they kept their worship and faith, but as a condition of their very being, like the touch by which they felt the solid world, and the breath of life they drew until they died. It was the simplest and yet most significant fact about them, and more than any

other accounted for their achievement of a new world. With mankind's imperfect material—for they knew their failings, indeed, revelled in them and beat themselves with them and knew death was too good for them if Christ had to suffer so much thorn and lance and nail for them—they yet could strive to fulfill the divine will, made plain to them by the Church. Relief from man's faulty nature could be had only in God. In obedience to Him, they found their greatest freedom, the essential freedom of the personality, the individual spirit in the self, with all its other expressions which they well knew—irony, extravagance, romance, vividness and poetry in speech, and honor, and hard pride.

If they were not large men physically, they were strong, and their bodies which the King commanded and their souls which God commanded were in harmony with any task because both God and King gave the same command. It was agreed that the King held his authority and his crown by the grace of God, communicated to him by the sanction of the Church. This was clear and firm. Thus, when required to serve the King in any official enterprise, great or small, they believed that they would likewise serve God, and had double strength from the two sources of their empowerment.

But if the King was divinely sanctioned he was also a man like all; and they knew one another, king and commoner, in the common terms of their humanity. To command, to obey; to serve, to protect—these were duties intermixed as they faced one another. The King was accountable to the people as well as to God; for they made the State, and the State was in his care. *Del rey abajo ninguno*, they said in a proverb, Between us and the King, nobody. So they spoke to him in parliaments. Representative government began with the Spaniards. All, noble or commoner, had equality before the law. They greatly prized learning and respected those who owned it, such as lawyers. Indeed, the law was almost another faith, with its own rituals and customs, and even its own language, closed to uninitiated eyes and ears. Learning

being scarce must also have seemed precious, and beyond the grasp of many a hungry mind. Yet with all the peoples of the Renaissance, the sixteenth century Spanish had intimations of world upon worlds unfolding, and they could not say what their children would know except that it would be greater than what they the fathers knew, watching the children at play with their little puppets of friars made from bean-pods, with the tip brokered and hanging down like a cowl, and showing the uppermost beard like a shaven head.

The year after the astounding first voyage of Admiral Christopher Columbus came the Bull of Pope Alexander VI giving the King and Queen of Spain for themselves, their heirs and successors, all the lands of the new world known and still to be known. Given the unexempted belief of all civilized society in the reality of the Pope's spiritual and temporal power, this was an act of unquestionable legality. (In making his proclamation at the Rio del Norte, the Governor cited it, outlining briefly the divine origin of the Papacy through the story of Christ.) Thus the Americas came to belong to Spain, and to reach those lands she became a great sea power, for a time the greatest in the world. Schools of navigation and piloting were founded at Ferrol, Cadiz and Cartagena. Universities maintained professorial chairs in cosmography. The great lords of Spain were given command of the fleets that plied to the Indies, though some had no qualities for the ocean but rank and magnificence, like the old marquis, a certain governor of the Armada, who through gout could not take off his own hat or feed his own lips, but had to have his courtesy and his food handled for him by servants. But still the Spanish sailed and sailed well, and their fleets were prodigious at their greatest, like the one that bore the King to marry the Princess of England. Gilded carving on the stern galleries, and sails painted with scenes from ancient Rome, and fifteen thousand banners at the masts, and damask, cloth of gold and silk draping the rails, and the sailors in scarlet uniforms, and all the ships standing to one

another in such perfect order as to remind those who saw it of the buildings of a city, and the music of silver trumpets coming from the ships as they sailed.

To recruit the Indies fleets, a public crier and his musicians went from town to town, mostly in Andalusia that bordered on the sea. The drums rolled in the plaza, the fifes whistled a bright tune, calling a crowd. Then the crier bawled out his news. He told the sailing date of the next fleet, how great the ships were, some of one hundred-twenty tons burden and sixty feet long, how skilled the captains, what opportunities oversea awaited the able-bodied young man between twenty-five and thirty years of age with a taste for adventure and good pay. And many a youth saw in his mind the great lands lifting over the ocean, with their Amazons who invited and broke men, and the golden treasuries waiting to be shipped home, and shapeless but powerful thoughts of how a fortune waited only to be seized, and a fellow's excellence recognized, his body given content, his pride matched with hazard, his dearness to himself made dear to all whom he should newly encounter. Many answered the fifes, the drums, and the crier. But if the recruitment was not great enough under the regulations which forbade signing on heretics and foreigners, then the merchant marine took on Jews, Moors, Frenchmen, Italians, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Germans, for the fleets had to sail and men had to sail them.

They sailed twice a year from Seville, in April and August, after three inspections held in the Guadalquivir. Crewmen signed on in the ship's register, took an oath of loyalty to the captain or the owner, and were bound for the voyage. Some were paid by the month, some by the mile, some with shares in the cargo. A sailor could not go anywhere without the commander's consent, and unless in port for the winter could not even undress himself without permission. If he did so, he was punished by being ducked in the sea three times at the end of a rope from the yardarm. The crew's rations left them hungry enough at times to

catch rats and eat them. The ship provided beef, pork, rice, fish, spices, flour, cheese, honey, anchovies, raisins, prunes, figs, sugar, quinces, olive oil and wine, but in poor quantities, and very little water. The officers fared better, dining apart.

The passengers prepared their own meals out of the stores they had brought along, mostly hard tack and salted beef. They were almost always thirsty. Some slept on deck, some in little cabins five feet square, on mats stuffed with a thin layer of doghair, and under a blanket of worked goatskin. Below decks all day it was nearly dark. They could hear cockroaches and rats at restless work, and feel lice multiplying. There was no place in which to walk around. They could only lie down or sit, day and night. In storm the alcázar at the stern swayed as if to fall off the ship, and the blunt prows under their heavy castle shook like shoulders burrowing into the deep. The pumps at work spewed up bilgewater as sickening as the air below decks, and all remained above whenever possible—the pilot navigating, the captain inspecting the artillery and other defenses, the master of the treasure packed in the hold, the cargo-master, the barber-surgeon, the caulker, the engineer, the cabin boys, the seamen.

But on busy days when the weather was blessed, the company was busy with interests. So long as they lasted uneaten, cocks were set to fighting on deck for an audience that took sides and made bets. A young fellow would become a bull and another would pretend to fight him with cape and sword. Clever people got up plays and gave them. Others sang ballads to the music of the vihuela. Others read poetry aloud or improvised rhymes about the people on board. There were always some who brought the latest books printed by the Crombergers of Seville, and sat reading by the hour. The fleet might be becalmed, and then boys and men went over the side to swim near the ships. And when the wind came alive again, the painted sails swelled out, and the hulls leaned, and their sodden timbered breasts pushed heavily against the waves, while the cabin boy sang out the devotions of praise

and thanks, "Amen: God give us a happy voyage, may the ships make a good passage, captain, master, and your lordships, good day my lords, from stern to prow," and at evening they cried, "Evening chow, ready now," and "Long live the King of Castile on land and sea," and all bowed and said "Amen."

So they sailed and were sailed, taking two to three months to come to New Spain, where, like Juan Ponce de León, when he saw Florida, they said, "*Gracias le sean dadas, Señor, que me permites contemplar algo nuevo,*" giving thanks to God that He granted them to see the new.

And some amongst them feeling if they could not speak the wonder of the New World, where dangers and hardships in the end bound them more closely to her than easy victories ever could have, exclaimed in their hearts, with love, in their various ways, "Oh, Virgin of the World, innocent America!"

That the Spaniards take her lawfully, with care, and with conscience, the Spanish kings of the Golden Age worked without cease.

Not all Spaniards had seen the king, but in every large company there was always one who had seen him, or knew someone who served him closely, and remembered much to tell. Anything they could hear of the king was immensely interesting and important. He was their pride even as he was their master. He commanded them by the power of God, and yet as they were so was he, a man, their common image, but with the glory and dignity of the crown over his head, and so, over theirs. What he was had greatly to do with what they were, as in all fatherhood. So, his image passed through them to the Indies, wherever they went, beyond cities and maps, however far along remote rivers. Even the gossip about great kings created the character of their subjects.

King Charles, who was also the Holy Roman Emperor, lived and worked in hard bare rooms with no carpets, crowding to the fire in winter, using the window's sunshine in summer. The doctors of medicine stated that the humors of moisture and of cold

dominated his quality. His face was fixed in calm, but for his eyes, that moved and spoke more than his gestures or his lips. His face was pale and long, the lower lip full and forward, often dry and cracked so that he kept on it a green leaf to suck, his nose flat and his brows pitted with a raised frown that appeared to suggest a constant headache. He held his shoulders high as though on guard. He would seem to speak twice, once within and fully, and then outwardly and meagrely. But his eyes showed his mind, brilliant, deep and always at work. He loved information for its own sake, was always reading, and knew his maps well. They said he saw the Indies better than many who went there, and held positive views on all matters concerning the New World and its conquerors.

But if his opinions were strong, so was his conscience. He said once that it was his nature to be obstinate in sticking to his opinions. A courtier replied that it was but laudable firmness to stick to good opinions. To this the Emperor observed with a sigh that he sometimes stuck to bad ones. He was in poor health for most of his life, and as a result favored himself in many aspects. In his young days he was a beautiful rider, with his light legs and his heavy lifted shoulders. He once liked to hunt bear and boar; but illness and business put an end to it. He worked all day and much of the night, until his supper at midnight, at which he received ambassadors, who were amazed at his appetite. Matters of state went on even then, by candlelight, as the platters were passed, and the baskets of fruit, and the water bowls. He wore his flat black cap, his black Flemish velvet doublet and surcoat with the collar of Germany-dressed marten skins, and his chain of the Golden Fleece. The letters of Cortés from New Spain had good talk in them, and the Emperor later had them published in print.

Whether or not America, so far away, was a matter of policy instead of feeling, Charles sought justice for the Indians of the New World. Before 1519 he was sending people to the Indies to study and report to him upon the conditions of the natives. Up-

permost was his desire that their souls be saved through Christianity. It was of greater moment that Indians became Christians than that they became Spaniards. So as the conquerors made cities in the New World they made schools, colleges and universities for the Indians, in which to teach them—often in Latin but more often in the Indian tongues which the friars learned rapidly—salvation in Christ. The Emperor held that through such salvation all else of life must naturally take its course and would come. He strongly supported the missionaries in the Indies, and inspired them and many laymen to build the Church in the New World even as ominous cracks ran up its walls in the Old.

But from the first, and increasingly, another spirit worked against the Indians. The military, the landowners, the civil officials believed that conversion was a proper thing, but once out of the way, let the natives be useful to them in labor and arms. But the priests meant what they preached, just as much as the men of the world meant what they ordered. Both said they served the crown as it desired to be served. Both appealed to the King.

His Holy Caesarean Catholic Majesty (for so he was addressed in documents) wished to know in all-determining truth. Was the Indian a man, as many claimed? Or was he an animal, as many others insisted? Could he understand Christianity? Did he deserve better than the yoke of slavery?

Commissions investigated, passions rose, and humanity triumphed. The Cardinal Adrian in Spain preached that the Indians were free and must be treated as free men, and given Christianity with Christian gentleness. The Emperor acted, and the laws for the Indies were decreed in that spirit. The crown gave its approval to the ideals of the missionary priests who ever afterward, over new land, went with the armies not only to convert but to protect Indians.

When he left Spain for Germany, and after his retirement from the throne in mid-century, the Emperor kept the problem in mind, for he wrote to his son Prince Philip to caution him that

he must be vigilant to prevent oppressions and injustices in the Colonies, saying that only through justice were sound business and prosperity possible. It was a cold and impassive statement of policy, but (like the brilliant black and white flash of those eyes in his pallid face that found it so difficult otherwise to express itself) true humanity shone behind expediency.

When the Emperor abdicated to become a country gentleman at Yuste near Placencia, there was still much to hear about him, even as he invented ways to pass the time. He made a garden. He designed and fashioned mechanical works, including a hand-mill to grind meal, and a marvelous set of little clock-work soldiers that performed military drills. Visitors brought him watches and clocks upon which he delighted to work. The joke went around that one time when he complained of his food, he was told by the majordomo that the only thing that would please his palate then would be a stew of watches. He laughed heartily at this.

From his early days in the Italian campaigns he loved the arts of music and painting. In his military travels, even to Africa, he took along his choir—the best choir in Europe—and pipe organs. His ear was true, he remembered music as well as he did facts, and he loved to sit and listen to a French air, *Mille regrets*. At Placencia he had his nine favorite paintings by Titian with him.

With a few guests in his party, he would go wandering through the woods with his harquebus in hand, watching for game. But the joy he took from this sport in his old age was more that of watching birds, and little animals, and their quick mysterious commerce, than that of killing them. He would shoot now and then, but his friends said that the pigeons pretended out of courtesy to be frightened of his blasts, and perhaps he was an old man hunting for life, not death.

But his piety kept death before him. He was read aloud to from the Confessions of Saint Augustine, and he could nod in recognition of anybody who turned sharply away from the great world to lead a modest life of outer trifles and inner mysteries of

faith and conscience. It was talked of everywhere, for thousands were there, when he had a Requiem Mass sung to rehearse his own funeral. It was just as though it were the actual funeral. There before the altar was the catafalque swept in black draperies and silver lace, with thousands of candles burning at all the altars and shrines, and the prelates and priests singing the pontifical Mass, and the Emperor's wonderful music in the stalls with the organ, and there in the middle of it wearing a black mantle was the Emperor himself, praying for the repose of his soul before it left his body.

The Spaniards knew the same thing in themselves—the strength and the countenance to stare upon contrition and death. For, in their belief, could anyone do enough to mortify himself, if he was to be worthy of salvation by the sufferings of the Son of Man upon the cross? The Emperor had a flail with which he would whip himself so hard that the thongs showed his blood. After his death it became known that in his will he left this flail to his son Philip, for him to prize all his life and in his turn to pass on as a beloved heirloom, a relic of the blood of the father. . .

Philip II spared himself no less, and left his image no less in the Indies, though in somewhat different manner. People missed the occasional humor and grace of the Emperor, even though under him they had had to work just as hard as under his son. But there was as it were a darkening of life that came when the Emperor retired, and dying in retirement, left all power to the new King. But the King demanded more of himself than of anyone else. New Spain and all the other Indies became greater, quieter, richer, and as the conquests receded, the work of government grew enormously. The whole world wrote to Spain. Her ships carried not only the treasure of the new world, they took also reports, contracts, budgets, petitions, court records, confidential intelligence, complaints and all manner of papers to Madrid. And there, the King himself read them, all of them, and marked his wishes upon their margins.

Secretaries came to him in the morning as he dressed, and after dinner at mid-day, and again to spend the long evening, while he dictated, initialled, weighed, decided; held in abeyance, revived for discussion, or postponed again; examined for policy or referred for further study, dozens, and hundreds, and tens of thousands of papers through a lifetime of late-working nights. Besides all that, there were the endless committees to receive, who sat through hours of giving all aspects proper consideration. Minutes of such meetings were kept, and, doubling the ecstasy of administrative indulgence, could always be referred to later. It was a poor business if anyone sought to relieve the King of any small details of his official burden. Some of the best men in the land were called to court for appointment to important posts, and then denied the use of their faculties of originality and initiative. No detail was too small to interest the King. If he was King and was to sign, then what he signed must be exquisitely proper; and he would put all the power, weight and style of his office into a debate upon the nicety of a word to employ in a certain phrase to be written down in a state paper. He would refuse to be hurried, but would spend himself twice over on a matter rather than settle it out of hand. Don Pedro Ponce de León (he was Governor Oñate's most serious rival for the appointment) wrote to the King from Mexico asking for the command of the entry into New Mexico to colonize the Rio del Norte, and as the ocean passage of letter and reply would take eight months more or less, he expected to hear nothing for a while. But time passed, and no answer came to him from the King, whereupon he wrote again, begging in all respect for a reply to his earlier petition. The reply when it came said, "Tell him it will take a year to decide."

There was much to decide at home. The King saw with sorrow the disorderly and frivolous nature of the populace, and issued decrees of prohibition upon conduct, possessions and belief. It was unseemly and therefore forbidden by royal edict to wear luxurious dress; to live amidst lavish surroundings; to use private

carriages or coaches except under certain stated conditions; to employ courtesy titles; to seek education beyond the frontiers of Spain; to open the mind to the inquiries of science; or otherwise fail in proper humility and self-discipline. It was a grief to Philip that despite his endless efforts to guide his great family of subjects in ways of piety and decorum all manner of license grew and continued. Rich and clever people found ways to evade the laws, and poor people could not even qualify under them to commit the crimes of indulgence they forbade. Orders came in a stream of papers from the palace, but Madrid was a mud-hole, the filthy streets choked with carriages and palanquins, bearing rich ladies who accosted men unknown to them, and of whom they invited proposals of shame. How could this be in a land where women were previously sacred and guarded within the family walls as the very Moors had done before them?

How could it be when any man worked so hard that he should be visited with so many sorrows and reverses? The King bent his head and spoke of the will of God. There were endless tales of the natural piety that sustained him in the hours of humiliation that came to Spain. The Dutch wars went against the Spanish forces. They were defeated in France. The English under an infidel Queen broke Spain's greatest fleet and a year later raided, burned and robbed Cadiz, Spain's richest city. Spanish ships were attacked homeward bound from the Indies. The King suffered all with courage, determined to be an example to all in adversity, that they might keep their faith. He declared that it was better not to reign at all than to reign over heretics. Of these there were not many, then, and those few learned or vanished, though the question remained whether the delicate seed of faith that could grow to such mighty power could have for its motive the habits of brutality of all agencies of discipline, such as the army, the constabulary, the office of the Inquisition, and the law courts alike. And still the King worked, writing orders to govern how many horses and servants a man could maintain with seemliness;

how funerals should be conducted, and how weddings; what public amusements might be countenanced and what not. And while he slaved at concerns so alarming and dear to him, there went unanswered pleas from his ambassadors oversea and viceroy's desperate for crown policies ("tell him it will take a year"), and groaning supplications from fiscal officers who feared mutinies unless the armies were paid.

How could a man's goodness be so crushing?

Those who saw him come to the throne saw his father's son, in the tall forehead, the vivid black and white eyes, the lower lip permanently out-thrust. Even then, as a young man, there was no mark of humor in his face, which was furrowed beside the nose and under the cheekbone. Yet it was a head of grace and distinction, lean above the ruffed collar of Brabant linen, and the puffed doublet worked in gold. His beard and hair, that had a little wave in it, were a golden brown. And then those who saw him long later saw a heavy face, with sallow color, and sacs about the eyes, now smaller and heavier-lidded. His dress was different, he wore a tall black cap and black garments relieved only by the starch-white of his collar. His spirit was heavy, too, and sallow, if souls had color. The feature most unchanged in his face was the deep cleft between his eyes, that made a scowl of abnegation natural to him in youth when he first renounced so much for himself, and that cut deeper in age, when he renounced so much in their own lives for others.

An image of his quality was the palace of the Escorial which he built on the sweeping plain outside Madrid, below the mountains. It was as big as a palisaded mesa. The plain was as barren as a desert. In New Spain and New Mexico there was much country of which that was the miniature. The palace rose in a great square of ochreous gray walls. It was so vast that human silence seemed a very part of its design. What no man could see but which the profuse flocks of little martins and swallows could see as they circled over it was that within the great square stood

inner walls, criss-crossing one another in the form of a grid-iron or grill. It was believed that this was built in imitation and endless reminder of the grill upon which St. Lawrence met his death. Thus Philip could have constant point for contemplation. Within the palace the long corridors that followed the lines of the grill were low and narrow, showing the bare granite of their walls. The floors were of unfinished stone. Coming in from even a hot summer's day the courtier met indoors the chill of the tomb. The palace was so made that a great portion of its internal volume was taken by a dark church whose dome and towers rose above the enclosing walls. The King's own bedroom, a cell, was placed so that he could look out from it through an indoor window and see the Mass at the high altar, which was just below. Church, monastery, palace and tomb, that tenebrous heart of the Empire, expressed in all its purposes the sacred and profane obsessions of the King its builder.

And if the monarch had his palatial rack designed after a saint's, the soldiers, the traders, the shopmen, the scholars, the voyagers of Spain each had his Escorial of the soul, where to endure the joys and the pains of his spiritual exercises he entered alone and in humility.

Perhaps the deeper a man's humility in the privacy of his soul, the more florid his pride in public. All Spaniards, high or low, could use a spacious manner. Its principal medium was the Spanish language. Not many could read; but all could speak like lords or poets. The poorest soldier in the farthest outlandish expedition of New Mexico might be a chip floating beyond his will on the stream of history, but still he could make an opinion, state it with grace and energy, and even, in cases, make up a rhyme for it. He spoke his mind through a common language that was as plain and clear as water, yet able to be sharp as a knife, or soft as the moon, or as full of clatter as heels dancing on tile. Like Latin, from which it came, it needed little to say what it meant. It called less upon image and fancy than other tongues, but made

its point concretely and called forth feelings in response to universal commonplaces rather than to flights of invention. With that plain strength, the language yet could show much elegance and such a combination—strength with elegance—spoke truly for the Spaniards and of them. The Emperor once said that to speak to horses, the best tongue to use was German; to talk with statesmen, French; to make love, Italian; to call the birds, English; and to address princes, kings, and God, Spanish. In the time of Cicero the Spanish town of Cordoba was famous for two things, its poetry and its olive oil. He said the poetry sounded as though it were mixed with the oil.

A passion for study filled the century of the Golden Age. In Spain, thirty-four universities were at work, and others were founded in the new world within a few years of the conquest. The German Jacob Cromberger and his sons established their printing house at Seville in 1500, reading became an indispensable part of living, and all because a complicated machine held together many rows of reversed little metal letters and pressed them into damp paper, again and again, until many copies of the same words and ideas were at hand. Because her language went everywhere with Spain's power, printers in Italy, France, the Netherlands and the Indies printed books in Spanish.

Everything found its way into print, even the ballads that previously passed through generations by word of mouth. People made them up in inns and on travels and marching in wars, telling droll stories or love stories or wicked scandals, and the rude narratives were sung wherever somebody had an instrument to pluck. Seeing how such efforts looked in print, men of letters began to write ballads in the style of the old popular ones, that had gone always changing as one man's memory revised the residue of another's. The new poetic ballads sang of the courts of chivalry; imaginary histories that revealed Spanish ideals of noble kingship, knightly valor, reverence for womanhood and death to monsters. True histories were also written in rhyme

long chronicles of heroes, and when Captain Perez de Villagr , the alumnus of the University of Salamanca, sat down to write the history of O ate's first year on the Rio del Norte, he wrote it in heroic verse. The Spanish world grew not only in range but also in meaning as the people saw its likeness in all that was made by writers and artists.

As his father the Emperor admired Titian of Venice, so King Philip admired and employed Domenico Theotocopuli, known as The Greek, who came from Greece by way of long studies and labors in Venice and Rome. He was a learned man and a pious one, and for the Escorial and churches elsewhere he painted many pictures that swept the eye and mind of the beholder upward to heaven. Often even the very eyes of the kings and saints he painted were gazing heavenward and shining with great diamond tears of desire, and seeing them so, the beholder cast his desires upward also. The skies of his pictures of martyrdoms and sufferings and triumphs were like the skies of Good Friday afternoon, torn apart and blowing aloft in black and white clouds through which the Spanish temperament could see the immortal soul of Christ as it flew to His Father from the cross. The Greek painted many likenesses of people of circumstance, who without their starch and black velvet and swords, their armor and ribbons, or their violet mantellets and trains, would have looked very much like everybody else in the Spanish populace, even those on the northern river of the latest and farthest Crown colony. All countenances which he limned were grave and melancholy, even that of the Madonna in the Nativity. The Spaniards were a people who did not often smile, but more often laughed outright or possessed their faces in calm, when all faces look sad. The Greek was much seen at Toledo, where he painted the town many times, making odd changes in exactly how it looked, yet by so doing, making the city's image combine with the beholder's feeling to produce a rise of the soul.

It was the same rise that Spaniards knew from music in the

High Mass, when the dark high vaults of the church where candlelight never reached would be filled with the singing of choirs, plain, without instruments. They heard the masses composed by the great Tomás Luis de Victoria of Avila, and Cristóbal Morales, and Francisco Guerrero. The voices of boys came like shafts of heaven, and in the polyphonic style, the voices of men rose under them and turned with melody, and the two qualities met and divided, the one qualifying the other, now with one long note held against several notes in a figure, again with highs against lows, and again with syllables against whole words, and loud against soft, so that in heavenly laws known to music alone an experience of meaning and delivery struck all who truly listened, and the stone arches and the drift of incense and the possibility of divinity in mankind and the Mass at the altar all became intermingled with the soul that rose. How, lost in dark choir stalls under lofting stone, could boys, making little round mouths in their round faces, strike so purely to the darkest self with their shining voices that seemed to come from beyond all flesh?

And yet there was other music that used the very flesh itself, spoke to it, enlivened it, cozened it with coarse jokes, and pulled its nose and made the hearers laugh and clap and stamp their feet. It was heard at the inns, in public squares, and in the theatres, when ballads were sung or skits and plays given by actors and dancers. They came out on a stage bringing sackbuts, or dulcimers, harps, lutes or vihuelas, or combinations of all these, and struck up a tune to which they sang a story with many verses. They plucked, beat, blew and nodded together, and often repeated with each verse a clever effect in which one musician gave a little variation at the same place each time, so that the audience listened for it in following verses. Such players entertained anyone who called for them and displayed a coin. They went from one tavern to another, ready to stand in a half-circle facing a table and play to a private party much to the advantage of any others

in the place. Their music went with the Spaniards wherever in the world they might go.

If popular balladry was the poor man's comfort, there was much to sing about as the world moved and poor times befell Spain in her might. Great fortunes shrank, and the high state of many nobles lost its quality because it could not be paid for, and wage-earners found their coins worth very little, and poor people lived always hungry. It was the very outpourings of wealth from the New World that caused such trouble. When so much more gold than usual came to be circulated, each little coin or bit of gold spent in trade was worth much less than usual, as gold itself became too common. In giving civilization to the new world, Spain seemed to give up its own strength as the new land found the lusty power to grow by itself. In the home kingdom, while all graces were maintained, the substance behind them shrank, and for great numbers of Spaniards the graces which they aired came to be pretensions and little else.

And yet there was that in the Spanish spirit which made of each Spaniard his own castle, and it was very like them all that as the wealth that sustained public nobility began to shrink, and as every *hidalgo* by birth disdained to reveal his poor estate, so many another man who had no title or claim to nobility adopted the airs and styles of the *hidalgo*, until the land became a parade of starving lords, real and false, who the lower they fell in worldly affairs the more grandly they behaved. Going hungry, they would loll against a wall in public, picking their teeth to convince the passerby that they had just dined on sweet carrots and turnips, sharp cheese, pungent bacon, fresh eggs, crusty roast kid, tart wine from Spanish grapes, and a covered dish of baked *gaspacho*, that was made out of wheat bread, olive oil, vinegar, onions, salt, and red peppers hot enough to make the eyes water.

There was little else for such a gentleman to do. If he had talents that could be employed, there was hardly anybody to pay him for them. He was a man of honor and to make a living could

not stoop to improper ways, which no matter how hard the times seemed always to prosper. If his shanks were thin and bare, and his sitting bones almost showed in his threadbare breechings, and his belly was puffy with windy hunger, then he must still have had his ragged cloak to throw about such betrayals. Within his cloak he could stand a noble stance, and at a little distance, who was the wiser? As the proverb said, "Under a bad cloak there may hide a good drinker," which gave comfort to fallen swagger; and to comfort the dream of impossible valor, there spoke another proverb, saying, "Under my cloak I kill the king."

But no patch ever failed to show, however lovingly stitched, even a patch on a man's pride. To cloak his spirit, the mangy gentleman had another sort of possession left to him from his better days. This was the high thought of chivalry, that gave to human life, all human life, so great a dignity and such an obligation of nobility on behalf of all other persons. There was a poor sweetness in such extravagant spending of spirit, that the more a man lacked simply to keep him alive, the more he disdained his own trouble and grandly swore to demolish the trouble of another. In his ironic self-knowledge the Spaniard knew such men, and smiled at the antic capers they cut in their hungry pretensions. And yet he bowed to their spirit which stated that "he is only worth more than another who does more than another." It was no surprise to him that a champion should vow the rescue of anyone in distress, without reference to rank or station. If there were different levels of life, then one man in his own was worth as much as another in his, and was free to state as much, and act accordingly. And as every soul originated in God, and so was equal to every other in worth, so its sufferings on earth deserved succor without discrimination. The Spaniard knew that the grandeur of God did not disdain the humblest surroundings, and could say with Saint Teresa of Avila, *Entre los pucheros anda el Señor*—God moves among the kitchen pots.

But all came back to hunger. Private soldiers who went to the

Americas were experienced in that condition. It was a marvel how far they could march, how hard they could fight, and how long they could cling to unknown country on empty stomachs. Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Coronado's soldiers, Castaño de Sosa pillaging at Pecos, Zaldívar crawling over deserts toward the river, all gnawed on tradition when rations were low. Certainly the adventurers did not enlist for the pay, for the pay was meagre and always in arrears, even that owed to the commanders in silver-gilt armor. Nor did they venture forth for commerce as it could affect the ordinary individual, for the risks were too great for uncertain profits, and in any case the Spanish gift for business fulfilled itself not in the largest but in the smallest affairs, face to face with another man. For the pleasures of business were firstly social—little exchanges of desire and deceit, indifference and truth, the study of human nature, the flourish of bargaining, the satisfaction of the righteous swindle, in buyer and seller alike. Nor was it inordinate love of adventure that took Spaniards past oceans and shores, and up the river, for adventure could be had anywhere, even at home. Perhaps more than any one other motive it was a belief in their own inherent greatness that took the men of the Golden Age to their achievements in geography and colonization.

For to them it was finer to make greatness than to inherit it; and after they made it, they could in all justice cry with the true chronicler of the conquest of Mexico, "I say again that I—I, myself—I am a true conqueror; and the most ancient of all . . . and I also say, and praise myself thereon, that I have been in as many battles and engagements as, according to history, the Emperor Henry the Fourth." In such spirit, what they did with so little, they did with style.

Even the swords that were extensions not only of their right arms but also of their personalities came out of humble means through fire and water to strength and beauty. Ovid sang the praises of Toledo blades, the best of which were made of old used

metal, such as horse-shoes. The Spaniard's sword was born at night-time, through fire, of a river and the south wind.

In the city hall of Toledo the master steelworkers—Sahagún the Elder, Julian del Rey, Menchaca, Hortuño de Aguirre, Juanes de la Horta—kept their metal punches when these were not in use to stamp the maker's name on a new blade. Every blade had its *alma*, and this soul was the core of old iron on whose cheeks were welded new plates of steel. Standing ready were the two gifts of the river Tagus that flowed below the high rocks of Toledo. These were its white sand and its clear water. The blades were born only on the darkest nights, the better to let the true or false temper of the steel show when red-hot; and of the darkest nights, only those when the south wind blew, so that in passing the blade from fire to water it might not cool too rapidly as a north wind would cool it. The clumsy weld was put into the coals where the bellows hooted. When it came red-hot the master took it from the fire. It threw sparks on meeting the air. Casting river sand on it which extinguished the sparks, the master moved to the anvil. There with taps of hammer and sweeps of the steel against the anvil he shaped the blade, creating a perfectly straight ridge down the center of each side, until squinted at endwise the blade looked like a flattened lozenge. Now the blade was put again into the fire and kept there until it began to color again, when the master lifted it into the darkness to see if it showed precisely cherry-red. If so, it was ready for the river. There stood handy a tall wooden pail filled with water from the Tagus. Into this, point down, went the blade for its first immersion. To keep the exact right time for each immersion, and to bring blessings, the master or one of his boys sang during the first one, "Blessed be the hour in which Christ was born," and then the blade was lifted out. Heated again, it was returned to the water, and they sang, "Holy Mary, Who bore Him!" and next time they sang, "The iron is hot!" and the next "The water hisses!" and the next "The tempering will be good," and the last, "If God wills." Then

once more the blade went to the fire, but this time only until it became dull red, liver-colored. Then with pincers the master held it by the tang which would later fit into the hilt, and had the boy smear the blade with raw whole fat cut from the sac about the kidneys of a male goat or a sheep. The fat burst into flame. They took the blade to the rack and set it there against the wall point downward. The fat burned away, the blade darkened and cooled through several hours. In daytime they sharpened and polished it, and if it were to bear an inscription, it went to the bench of the engraver, who chiselled his letters on one of the flat faces, or perhaps both, spelling out a pious or patriotic motto, like one on a sword found in Texas not far from the Rio Grande, that read, on one side, "POR MY REY," and on the other, "POR MY LEY," thus swearing protection to king and law. The hilt, with guard and grip, then was joined to the tang, and those for plain soldiers were of well-turned iron, but without inlays of gold or silver, or studdings of smooth jewels, or wrappings with silver-gilt wire that variously went on to the swords of officers and nobles.

And at last the maker sent for his stamp from the city hall and let his device be punched into the blade at its thickest part near the guard, and the proud work was done, and the Spanish gesture could be sharpened and elongated across the world.

Both within the Spaniard and without him lay the country which Lope de Vega called "sad, spacious Spain." If Spaniards enacted their literature, it was because, like all people, they both created literature and were created by it. So it was with memories and visions in the colony of the New Mexican river wilderness. Their hopes of what to be were no less full of meanings than their certainties of what they had done, and both found their center of energy in a moral sense that gave a sort of secret poetry to the hard shape of life. The Spaniard was cruel but he loved life, and his melancholy brutality seemed to issue forth almost involuntarily through the humanitarian laws and codes with which he surrounded himself. If his nature was weak his conscience was

strong, and if he sinned his first act of recovery must be to recognize his guilt. When one of the most brutal of the conquerors of the new world was dying of wounds given to him by Indians he was asked where he ached, and he replied, "In my soul."

So the baggage of personality brought by the colonists told of their origin, their faith, the source of their power, the human types by which they perpetuated their tradition; and forecast much about how they would live along the river.

But in that very summer of 1598 when the newest colony of the Spanish Empire was settling on the Rio del Norte in Northern New Mexico, the Empire was already ailing. Its life stream carried human tributaries to the river, but already at its source, in Madrid, the springs of Spanish energy were starting to go low. It was an irony of history that just as the American continent was being comprehended, the first great power that sought it began to lose the force to possess it. It would take two more centuries for the flow to become a trickle that barely moved and then altogether stopped. But the Spanish effectiveness in government, society and commerce began to lose power in the new world with the failure of life in the last of the kings of the Golden Age.

Laboring inhumanly to govern his world-wide kingdoms for goodness and prosperity, Philip II left them a complicated legacy of financial ruin, bureaucratic corruption and social inertia. After a dazzling conjugation of *to do*, the destiny of Spain seemed to turn toward a simple respiration of *to be*. One was as true of the Spanish temperament as the other.

If Philip left to his peoples anything in the way of a true inheritance, one that expressed both him and them, and that would pass on through generations, it was his example in adversity, his patience facing a hideous death, and his submission to the will of God.

He lay through the summer of 1598 in the Escorial holding the crucifix that his father the Emperor had held on his own death-bed. The son in an agony of suppurating tumors repeatedly

gnawed upon the wood of the cross to stifle his groans. His truckle-bed was close to the indoor window through which he could look down upon the big altar of the Escorial church. In the early mornings he could hear the choir singing in the dark stalls and watch the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass performed for the repose of his soul whose liberation was nearing. But it came slowly. On August 16 he received the pontifical blessing from Rome. A fortnight later he took the last sacraments, and afterward spoke alone to his son and heir on the subject of how reigns ended and crowns passed and how instead came shrouds and coarse cinctures of rope in which to be buried. For days and nights the offices of the dying were chanted by priests in his cell. If momentarily they paused, he whispered, "Fathers, continue, the nearer I come to the fountain, the greater my thirst." Before four in the morning on September 13 he asked for a blessed candle to hold. Its calm light revealed a smile on his face. His father's crucifix was on his breast; and when he gasped faintly three times, and died, and was enclosed in a coffin made of timbers from the *Cinco Chagas*, a galleon that had sailed the seas for him, the crucifix was still there. By his will the blood-crusted flail left to him by his father now passed to the new ruler, King Philip III. In the austere grandeurs of such a scene the deathly luxuries of the Spanish temperament, as well as the dying fall of the Empire, found expression. In the province of New Mexico, at San Juan de los Caballeros, in the valley of the Rio del Norte, near the junction with the Chama, where willows and cottonwoods along bench terraces of pale earth all imaged the end of summer, the Crown's new colony was at work on a matter of enduring importance to their settlement. By order of Governor de Oñate they were already building their church.