

Brother of the
Third Degree

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CHAPTER I CHILDHOOD

There is a principle, proof against all argument, a bar against all progress, and which if persisted in cannot but keep the mind in everlasting ignorance-and that is, contempt prior to examination. —PALEY.

Accept nothing that is unreasonable; discard nothing as unreasonable without proper examination” —BUDDHA.

MY name is Alphonso Colona. I am a Mexican of pure Spanish descent, but was born in the city of Paris. I am the only son, but had a beautiful sister, Esmeralda, three years my junior.

My father, Ferdinand Colono, was a direct descendant of the Colonos of Granada, who traced their ancestry back to the time of the Moors, and who were known throughout the Hispanian peninsula for their skill as physicians. My mother was of the noble Vesta family of Seville, who were likewise most skilled physicians.

Father and mother first met while they were students in Paris. After ten years of the purest and most studious companionship, and after they had both graduated with highest honors, they were married; and I am the first offspring of that union. After my birth my parents moved to the City of Mexico, where my father's parents had located early in the nineteenth century.

There had always been a mystery connected with their schooling; a mystery I did not understand until late in life. They were two of the most learned people of their time, and strange to say, they came from the very center of materialistic thought deeply imbued with mystic ideas.

Upon his return to Mexico, father immediately commenced to practice as a physician, and soon became known far and near for his wonderful success and skill.

In fact, his fame became so great that it was not confined to Mexico alone, but extended throughout the entire west; and he was offered almost fabulous salaries by the governing powers of

the South American states.

All these he respectfully declined, and remained in the city administering to the rich and poor alike, never refusing the low or the high. As a result he was known and beloved by all, and exerted a powerful influence both in governmental circles and among the masses.

Mother, scarcely less learned, and most highly accomplished in art and music, possessed an influence equally as great as father's, but, except on special occasions, spent most of the time at home as the instructor of sister and myself, considering it here special duty to be our tutor.

Our home was beautifully located upon a hill in the suburbs of the city. A two-story building with a classical exterior in stucco, and a large interior court beautifully paved with many-colored pebbles and made pleasant by a sparkling fountain and tropical plants and trees.

Many years have passed away since mother sat here in the cool of the evening and pointed out and explained to sister and I the starry constellations which shine so brightly in the clear sky of all tropical countries.

Still do I remember with most vivid clearness those evening lectures. She did not consider the starry hosts as mere shining lights to dispel the gloom of night, but thought like her ancestors of Moorish times that all were filled with life, the dwelling places of gods and spirits, and had a most intimate relation with the children of earth. Many years have passed away, many vicissitudes and the bright sunny days when my beautiful mother would take Esmeralda and me to the neighboring mountain peak, and cultivate our tastes for nature's beauty as we gazed out upon the placid mirror of the gulf, and far away to the blue and misty mountains 'round about. I still remember the pleasant lessons in geology and natural history we received upon these journeys, for many were the curious stones, plants and animals we here found joy in studying. I still recall the loving light that shone from mother's dark, bright eyes as she cautioned us not to harm the little creatures, as all life was sacred and from God; that these small insects were in existence for a purpose, and we could learn more by studying them in life than by pulling them to pieces in death.

After frequent journeys to the mountain, even the birds seemed to learn we were not like most beings of our kind, and became kind and friendly, lighting on our shoulders and perching on our hands. Even now I see Esmeralda, with her long, dark curls floating in the wind, laughing and talking to the redbreast on her hand.

Ah! These recollections made me sad for many years. I loved my beautiful mother and sister with a pure and holy love, and I often wished I was a child again to enjoy the unalloyed happiness of those hours. But now I know this was not wise. You see, dear friends, what I have lost, but do you know what I have gained? Great were those joys, but still greater are those that come from the full unfoldment of our spirit natures. And then, it is not wise to dwell upon the past beyond recall, except in study that may better guide our footsteps in the future.

Father, while almost constantly administering to the sick, never lost an opportunity to be at home, and frequently accompanied us upon those mountain journeys or talked with us beside the fountain in the court.

Mother and I would talk for hours upon philosophy and science, and Esmeralda and I, though young in years, sat by and took deep interest in their conversations, which, while we did not fully comprehend seemed, by some unknown and interior intuition, strangely familiar. The child knows more than we are wont to give it credit. Knowledge does not come from the intellectual mind alone; the pure, uncontaminated heart dwells close to the spirit wisdom and reflects its light.

In addition to his professional duties, father taught what I at that time thought to be a school of medicine. In his laboratory, on the second floor, he never allowed us to enter; its only door of heavy oak was locked with a peculiar and strange looking lock, and its windows were covered with iron bars. Every Wednesday evening a number of men called and repaired with father and mother to this room. This number I noticed to be almost invariably twelve, and they generally came and went alone. During these Wednesday evening meetings sister and I remained with a tried and trusted servant, who saw that we retired at the proper time. Thus things continued for eleven years, and I was fourteen and

sister eleven. All was love and kindness, and year in and year out was a constant but pleasant school. Mother was an exceptional linguist, and I, while only fourteen, had become proficient in Spanish, French, English and Italian, and was well along in the natural sciences, philosophy and art. Esmeralda was fully my equal, but music was her forte; and when her voice rose in song, crowds of peons gathered in the street and listened in silent awe to the perfect beauty of her voice. Both of us were accomplished artists upon many instruments, and while she played the harp I would accompany her upon the violin. These family concerts, in which father and mother often joined gave them much pleasure, as also the wonderful resemblance we bore to them, I becoming every day more like my father, while Esmeralda was the perfect picture of her mother.

One evening father returned earlier than usual, and he and mother took seats beside the fountain and were soon very earnestly in conversation. Sister and I were playing with a large collection of fine sea-shells beside the court, and, ordinarily, would not have paid more than passing attention to their conversation; but the absence of father's usual kiss and play, together with the sad look upon his kind and handsome face, attracted our attention, and we stopped our play to listen.

"Nina," he answered, kissing her, "I have been thinking that our love-life must soon come to an end and give place to more serious duty. And, while I would not for a moment shirk the task laid down for us, it fills me with unusual sadness to know that we must part."

"You forget, dear husband, that while we may appear to separate, our souls are always one. Our twenty years of pure love and unselfish labor have bound us inseparably together in our interior natures, and unfolded our higher faculties until we are now fitted for a still more noble work. We love as only pure, unselfish souls can love; but we must not neglect our duty to those who all these years have overshadowed us with their loving protection. Neither should we forget that all things here on earth are fleeting. Nothing but the real endures. We have been instructed in the science which leads to the eternal, and for twenty years have enjoyed the highest happiness of earth to aid us to a dim perception of a

still higher and eternal joy. Shall we now, for thoughts of self as separate from the All, renounce our blessed privilege and neglect our higher duties?"

Mother's face was radiant, and a halo of light shone around her head, while her eyes were bright with a wondrous beauty.

"My darling wife," responded my father, "you nobly represent the Masters; you do full justice to the noble Vestas; you recall me to my duty. Truly, how uncertain is this earth's existence! When all is bright, a cloud may be overhanging. Today we live in peace, happiness and love; to -morrow death may desolate our home, fortune change, and wealth give place to rags. We, truly, by being pledged to Masters, have been overshadowed by their protecting love; and we shall not now allow the joys that are but fleeting to lead us from the path of duty and the bliss that is eternal."

"Well spoken, husband; now both are strong - what is the news your face bespeaks?"

"I have this day received special news from France; Santos has passed his initiation and will be here before long to relieve me of my charge. He will be accompanied by Albarez, the meaning of which I know not; but we may be sure it portends change."

"True, husbands, this is significant; yet use not the word portend. IT implies evil; and we may be assured that the presence of one so great can mean naught but good. But, if this is the case, it is time to give our children more advanced instructions."

"Yes," answered father, "their knowledge, together with their intuitions, will enable them to now understand; I will join you and them in a ramble over the mountain tomorrow, when we can speak with freedom on the subject which we have guarded for so long, yet which will be of vast importance in their lives."

With this, their conversation drifted into other channels; and by and by, sister and I tiring of our play, got our instruments and all four joined in an evening concert.

The next morning lunch was prepared in anticipation of a whole day on the mountain. The sad look on the face of father the evening before had disappeared, and he joined with lively interest in our rambles. All the morning our geological hammers broke the rocks, and many were the flowers and plants we analyzed. The mountain-top was covered with many sea -shells, and father took

advantage of our inquiries concerning them to give a talk upon the ancient world, when what is now land was then the bottom of the sea, and what is now sea was then the home of vast and mighty civilizations long since lost to history. After partaking of our noon lunch, and when all were seated upon the great porphyry rock that marked the summit, father commenced the following talk:

“Children,” he said, as mother took her seat between us, “the full meaning of what I have to tell you will be made clear as you grow older; and, as it is surrounded with considerable mystery, and what cannot at present be fully explained to you, I must trust to your innate knowledge to make it plain.”

“Your mother and I are members of a secret Brotherhood, all of whose members are pledged to devote their lives in labor for mankind. Not only we, but our parents and ancestors for many ages before us were, or are, identified with this secret order.”

Esmeralda and I were now paying the closest attention, and father’s words had a strange fascination for me.

“This Fraternity,” he continued, “has many degrees or grades of membership, extending from those who work unselfishly in the humblest walks of life, to those who mark the highest possibilities of human development. Each degree has its peculiar duties and obligations, and your mother and I belong to what is called the fourth degree. As members of this degree, and before we can pass on to the exalted ‘Third Degree,’ we must raise, in pure love and through all the paths of virtue and goodness, two souls to take our places in the world when we pass on.

“You, dear children testify to the fulfillment of that duty, and we trust and believe that you will be fully competent and willing to do your part as you grow older. In addition to this duty, we must live a loving and unselfish life for twenty years as ordinary members of the world, during which time we are to teach and train you until you are able to proceed by yourselves.

“If these duties are faithfully fulfilled, if for all these years we are a living example of all that is pure and good, it is our privilege to become members of the exalted ‘Third Degree,’ rise superior to the bonds of death, and live immortal in the purest love.”

“Children, our twenty years have now almost expired, and

the only unfulfilled condition is that you should be fit to fill our places. We know, for our life of study has not been for naught, that this is only a matter of time, and that you both will be our superiors.

"We tell you these things, dear children, because we have reasons to believe changes are soon to call us to new duties, which may necessitate a sundering of the ties of love.

"In explanation of this seeming cruelty, we would say that while the love which has been ours is blissful, it cannot compare with a still higher love which marks a higher life. And remember, children, that whatever may come to pass, if love-bonds are broken and you appear to have no friends, you are, by right of birth and the Brotherhood's adoption, surrounded by protecting powers that defy all opposition.

"So long as you live a life of purity and goodness, and adhere strictly to the path of duty, the Great Ones, called Protectors, will protect you from all harm."

Grand and noble were the words of father as he continued upon this subject which seemed to possess his entire soul, but still more so were the beautiful and eloquent words of mother who followed him with a description of the great souls who were members of the "Third Degree." With full confidence they outlined the possibilities that now lay before them and us, their children, and when they had finished Esmeralda and I, although young in years, were filled with an enthusiasm like their own.

"Now, children," said father in conclusion, "we have taken you into our full confidence that you may in the future more fully understand our actions; and while we impose no solemn pledge upon you, you will keep secret all we have spoken until it is permitted you, by proper authority, to reveal."

Mother's description of the members of the Brotherhood, with their great knowledge, powers and wondrous beauty, filled us with desires to be like them and to know more of their relations with our parents.

Evening having now arrived, we returned to our home, Esmeralda and I walking on ahead with the Brothers the sole theme of our conversation.

Nothing unusual occurred until next Wednesday evening, the

regular night for the meeting in the laboratory, which meetings we now know from father's talk were of a Masonic lodge of which father was Grand Preceptor.

Upon this evening father returned accompanied by a stranger.

He was a tall, lithe, agile-looking man, with brown curly hair, rather long, and thin curly whiskers and mustache of the same color. His eyes were of a steel blue, wide open and very penetrating in their look. His features were pale and somewhat angular in contour. His form was almost completely enveloped by a long indigo-colored cloak which hung loosely from his shoulders to his knees. Upon his hands he wore gloves, which I noticed he never removed, and he always spoke in a low, suppressed tone which seemed to have a power unknown, as it sent shivers through us when we heard it. I noticed, also, that the stranger avoided personal contact with any one, and immediately upon his arrival he proceeded to the laboratory from which he never departed, not even for meals, which were prepared especially by mother and delivered in person.

Upon the arrival of this stranger, mother came to us and said that she and father had a very difficult work to perform that night and we must not be alarmed if they did not come down until late the next day. Then kissing us good-night she repaired to the laboratory, father remaining below until the usual time. About eight o'clock the weekly callers arrived, but this time they were all in a body and led by another stranger. Esmeralda and I were now left with Juanita, the maid, and father, with the others, proceeded to the laboratory.

After retiring to my bed the mysteries of the last few days commenced to crowd upon me, and it was only after a long and restless evening that I fell asleep.

Sleep, strange mystery, who knows thy meaning and the wondrous powers that in thee find full play? I fell asleep to dream I was carried far off into a wild and mountainous country, where, on the steep and rocky side of a lofty range, encompassed around by peaks of snow, was a large, monastic-looking building. Next, by the marvelous transformations which characterize the dream, I found myself in an interior court, surrounded by cyclopean col-

umns and thronged with white-robed priests. Upon a large white cube, which served as a throne, at one end of the court, sat a robed figure in a chair of pearl or ivory. His head was uncovered, and he wore long golden curls; his face was young, his eyes mild and blue. As I looked his form became surrounded with a halo of light, and as I gazed more intently I saw that his form was transparent like crystal, and a golden light emanated through the light blue robe of gauze that enveloped it. Then his features changed, and from the kind and gentle look that had at first marked his face, it became stern and violet scintillations filled the air around, with eyes fixed in awe and wonder on the scene, I saw the whit-robed throng draw back, and twelve figures, transparent, but not golden like the first, robed in gauze of yellow, come forward and stand in a circle around the throne. Then I noticed for the first time a golden zodiac upon the white marble floor, around the throne, and each figure stood within a sign. The court was flooded with radiant light from no apparent source, and now, behold! Twelve figures, robed in indigo, lead forward another figure in like ferments. A beautiful form of pearly-white shines through its transparent folds, and lo! as I gaze I recognize my mother. Upon her broad noble brow, now ivory-pearl color, shines with brilliant luster a five-pointed golden star. Oh, how beautiful her face! How calm and grand her features! Her twelve robed conductors separate in front, six take each side and join behind to form a triangle around her. She advances. Then a fog came over the scene and I became lost in deep and dreamless sleep. O soul! Untrammelled by the chains of matter, where did you in this sleep wander?

On the following morning I learned from Juanita, that after having been in session the entire night, all had left before dawn except the mysterious stranger who was still with father and mother in the laboratory. "And," whispered the maid, with a scared look upon her face, "the court started to return to my room, the full moon lighting up the court showed it full of white figures."

I said nothing in reply, but could not help but relate her strange statement with my dream, and determined to ask mother concerning it.

Nine o'clock came, and father came down with a pale and

careworn look upon his face.

Noon came' father took a light dinner with us, but in answer to our questions only said, "Mother will come down later."

Three o'clock came, and at last mother appeared. On, how supremely beautiful was her face, now a pearl-white in color, and radiant with divine love. She came to us, and as she kissed me her touch thrilled my entire being. A delightful fullness filled my heart; I never felt so happy.

In answer to our questions, she said that the stranger was great Master, and that by his aid she had gone far away and seen many of the mysteries of the higher life. When I told her of my dream she smiled happily, and, kissing me, said:

"My dear son and brother, you are wiser than you know, and will some time know more fully the meaning of your vision,"

The stranger did not appear until evening, when he walked into the court where we were all sitting together, and, coming up in front of me, uttered some strange words which had a wonderful effect.

A white mist formed in a cloud before my eyes; the vapor, vibrating rapidly, took form, and a panoramic view spread out before me. I saw a smooth, mirror-like body of water surrounded by mountainous hills and containing many islands; a bright blue sky, filled with floating banks of snowy clouds, was reflected on its placid surface; then a vast fleet of ships full of armed men appeared, and the land also became black with a surging mass of shielded warriors. How, I knew not, but I seemed to recognize the scene, and the words Xerxes, Persia, Greece, formed in my mind. Then the mist took new shapes, and I saw a plain covered with hosts of dark-faced, turbaned men, with short, curved swords, mounted upon Arabian steeds. Opposite this swarthy host was an army of men of giant size, with long, yellow hair, immense battle-axes and suits of mail. I saw the turbaned hosts rush forward with loud cries. The two sides met in wild, tumultuous battle, and I saw the words - Martel, Poitiers. Then the mist faded away, and I heard the strange man say:

"Brother of yesterday and tomorrow, your course is fixed." Then turning to Esmeralda he gazed at her long and intently. As he gazed her features became fixed, and her eyes took a far-away

look; but I could see no mist. Then he uttered the words: "Child-sister of the Orient in western form, thou, too, shalt return." He waved his hand, and sister started up with a look of surprise upon her face as she turned inquiringly to me.

This strange performance had, taken only a few moments of time, and father and mother had been silent witnesses.

As the stranger stepped back from Esmeralda, he turned, and with a peculiar gesture and knowing look, departed.

We both plied father and mother with questions; but they had seen no mists or scenes. They had only noticed our steady gaze and heard the words of the stranger, whom they now said was a great adept named Alvarez; and that he had the most wonderful powers, such as belong to all exalted men among which was that of recalling temporarily to others their past existence.

"For," said father, "the soul is eternal and uncreated, and passes from life to life and country to country. No doubt what you beheld were scenes in your past existence, and if you join the Brotherhood and pass through its higher courses, the vast knowledge that is concealed within your soul from many lives gone by will be revealed and become a part of your consciousness. This is in reality the secret of the Masters' knowledge of whom we have so often spoken, and it is within your power to become like them, for they are but men passed on to higher planes of being."

"Yes, children," added mother, "you are spirit-souls dwelling in bodies for the time being. When you have purified, trained and perfected your bodies and made them fit instruments for the manifestation of spirit, it will bring to you all knowledge, for it is the knowing power in man."

Thus you see my early training. From childhood my life had been full of mystery; and, at the early age of fourteen, I had formed ideals of perfect men called Masters, like whom I wished to be. If my life has been different from most men's this will help explain it. These mystic teachings of my parents, together with my strange experience with Alvarez, made the Brotherhood a constant subject of my thoughts. The presence of the adept, Alvarez, had evidently caused a change, for the next Wednesday evening there was no lodge-meeting. In answer to our questions, father said his duty had been performed and his charge had been trans-

ferred to others.

CHAPTER II

SEVERED TIES

Two weeks after the departure of the adept, Alvarez, father entered the court with a letter which he handed to mother as he took a seat beside her near the fountain. Having broken the seal and read, she handed it to father, at the same time calling Esmeralda and me to the seat beside her.

"Ferda," she said, as father laid down the letter and we approached, "it is all for the best, and we must show no sign of weakness." Then turning to us she said:

"Dear children, we have lived long and happily together, but the time has now come when we shall have to separate. Alphonso, Esmeralda and I must leave on the first steamer for Paris. I have been called there to perform a duty, and will take Esmeralda along so she can complete her studies. You have still much to learn which father can best teach you, and when you have become sufficiently advanced to be prepared for teachings higher than he can give, you will also come to Paris and we will be together again. Now, children, we will have our family concert for the last time, as I understand that the Altata leaves Vera Cruz the day after tomorrow, and sister and I will have to take that steamer."

Father acquiesced in everything that mother said, and I, fully confident of the superior wisdom of my parents, willed to take things as they came. Nevertheless, it was not without a feeling of sadness that Esmeralda and I went for our instruments, and tenderly we caressed each other on the way.

"What mother says is for the best, brother," said sister, "and while you are learning to be a great doctor, I will become a great artist, and then we will meet again in Paris and be all the happier because of our separation. For, if we were always to be together, we would not realize the darkness that comes from separation; and, no doubt, after being away from each other for some time, we will love more strongly when we meet again. Then observe how much father and mother love each other, and they bear it all in calmness. We, too, must be like them, strong and brave; and by

and by we will become members of the Great Brotherhood.

"Do you know, brother, I believe mother's sudden call to Paris has something to do with this great Brotherhood about which they have talked so much?"

"What do you think, sister?" I asked.

"Why, I think mother is advanced, and is much greater than we know or think. In fact, I think neither of us fully knows our parents. I believe both are great members. And, brother, I believe that when the great adept, Alvarez, was here, he found out that mother is advanced, and he has now sent for her. Anyhow, we will write often, and you will tell me all about father and I will tell all about mother."

We had now returned to father and mother in the court, and, once started, continued our concert until late at night.

Father and I played our violins, and sister and mother played the harp and flute.

Sudden though the announcement had been, there was no delay; and father and mother, taking everything in a calm and systematic manner, were ready for departure the next day.

We all took the train for Vera Cruz, where mother and sister board the Altata for New York on their way to France.

Father had all along mastered his emotions, but I noticed tears in his eyes and heard his suppressed sobs as he kissed his loving wife and daughter "good-bye."

I hung around my dear mother's and sister's necks until the order was given to return, then with father I kissed them a sad "good-bye" and descended into the boat to be rowed ashore.

Mother seemed to be possessed with a marvelous calm, and this fact undoubtedly strengthened father. This was not because of her supreme control over all her part, but because of her supreme control over all her feelings and emotions. 'Tis only now, after many years of toil, labor and experience, that I begin to realize the exalted nature of my mother. 'Tis only now, when I know the full meaning of that parting, that I can appreciate my father's strength of character. Truly was their love of duty great when they would sacrifice a life of happiness to work for mankind's good.

Father and I were rowed back to the landing, and there stood and watched the black hull of the Altata as it grew smaller and

smaller upon the waters of the gulf.

A long cloud of black smoke rose from the steamer's stack and circled across the clear blue sky, that gave no token of a coming storm. The birds were chirping in the trees and the air was full of the busy hum of insect life. The many colored plants and trees, fresh from the morning dew, made the world around a land of beauty, and everything in happiness seemed to try to soothe our sadness.

That day we domiciled at the hacienda, home of Don Ignacius Martenez, a great scholar and physician of the city who was a fellow-student in the occult and a particular friend of my father.

When he learned of the departure of mother and sister, he shook his head gravely, and said: "Senor Colono, I would not cause you any unnecessary fear or uneasiness, but you must have neglected to look at your charts before this action."

"Truly, Don Ignacius," replied my father, "I have not noticed the planetary aspects for some days now, although I never neglect that knowledge when practicing, as I deem the influences and substances that are symbolized under the names of the planets to be most intimately related to disease. Like Hippocrates, I hold that astrology in its true sense is the very foundation of therapeutics. But, Don Ignacius, what are the indications?"

In reply, Don Ignacius took us to his study, where he called our attention to a large celestial globe of some transparent material, and having the constellations thereon in colors; while within, and capable of different adjustments, was our solar system with the sun in the center.

"You will notice," said the Don, "that the planets portend a storm, and that upon the water; Saturn and Uranus, both maleficent planets, are in conjunction, and the Moon, Venus and Mars are in the same sign, the sign that rules the gulf. This is evil; and while I hope no harm will come, I prophesy a change ere long."

Father evidently fully understood the remarks of Don Ignacius, and agreed with him in his conclusions; but, in reply simply said he had obeyed orders and could believe only for the best. I had been an attentive listener, and although I myself had some confidence in astrology, as I looked at the clear blue sky I thought their wisdom this time must certainly be at fault.

But my conclusions proved erroneous, for few hours later, with almost incredible swiftness, the sky became overspread with dark and ominous-looking clouds. The wind arose, and the blackness of night usurped the day.

Then came a short gust of wind, a slight shower of rain, and then a calm - a dreadful calm - oppressive in its stillness. Then a storm - a terrible storm. The wind roared and the trees snapped before its awful force. The very timber of the building screeched and trembled beneath the blasts. The heavens seemed a holocaust of fire, and the thunders contested with the roaring winds in awful din of terror.

In an hour all was over. Only an hour - yet, O God! What devastation it had wrought! What violence it had done! What changes it had brought!

Throughout the storm father had sat with a stern, far-away look in his eyes; and now, when all was over, I noticed a change had come over his features. No more that happy smiled of yore, but a stern and inexpressible sadness.

"My dear brother," said the Don, taking my father's hand, "I feel with you, and would give what strength I could in this hour of doubt and trial. It seems impossible to think the steamer could survive that storm, but all is for the best. We cannot lament over that which some call death, for we know that with her it would be but the commencement of new life. You have lost her from this life, but your loss is her gain. And when we recall the facts as they really are, it is even you gain, for while you have lost her in the visible, she will be constantly present in the invisible; and what looks like separation is in reality a closer union. Then remember, brother, that you acted in accordance with Masters' orders, and they are wiser than we. And when we look at it in this light, we must remember that if she still had duties in this world of form, she was guarded by those against whom not even this tempest could prevail."

Don Ignacius' words had a strengthening power, and father shook his hand and said: "My dear brother, you speak words of truth; I have loved my wife until that love has become selfish, and, no doubt, this is brought to recall me to my duty and direct my love to man. I will be strong and never more forget my true labor

as a man. I obeyed the Masters' orders; I have full confidence in their superior wisdom, and from henceforth I dedicate my life to humanity and truth."

As father spoke he arose, the very picture of self-control; and his sad, whit face became lighted up with a noble calm."

"My son, Alphonso," he said, turning to me, "remember the words that have here been said; impress them well upon your mind and heart. Your mother is not dead. There is no death. Through that act or process so called we pass from prison-forms of flesh into the universal light and love.

"In all probability your loving mother and sister have passed from our kind of life into higher planes of joy and labor. "

"Tis left for us to continue in our labors here and earn the right to join them in the higher brotherhood of love. Will you follow me in this great effort? Will you join with me in efforts to reach this end?"

I seemed to imbibe my father's strength, a new life pulsed through me, and an inner voice said: "On! On!"

With a determination and enthusiasm I had never shown before, I answered, "Yes."

Father kissed me, and Don Ignacius grasping my hand said:

"You are a noble son and destined for great work; great wisdom will you have and pass beyond. Go with your father; study well; he is most competent to teach. Be pure, be good, and full of love for man; and thy end is fixed and certain."

We remained with Don Ignacius still another day. The papers giving an account of the storm said it had swept the entire coast and gulf, and all vessels on the water were undoubtedly lost.

Following was a list of the passengers on the Altata; and after Senora Nina Colono and daughter was reference to two unknown men who had embarked just as the boat was pulling anchor, and whose names had not yet been registered.

The next day father and I returned to the city, and from that time I became his almost constant companion. The old laboratory was opened, and I was taken through a thorough course in chemistry, and everything that pertains to medicine was made a subject for investigation. Father became more assiduous than ever in his attention to the sick, and I accompanied him on all his visits, lis-

tening to his lectures on the way. As time went by, and my knowledge increased, he spoke with less reserve, and, pledging me to secrecy, told me much about the occult theories of medicine. The science of signatures and correspondences were broadly outlined, and he told me more fully of his schooling in Paris.

Mother and sister were not banished from our thoughts or conversations; we talked of them often, and although it was with sadness, we controlled our feelings and did not waste time in unprofitable longings for what was past.

Speaking one day of his success in medicine, father said:

"I do not treat disease as many suppose, and my success does not come from the titles that follow my name, nor from the diploma which I have from one of the world's most celebrated schools, but from the knowledge that I acquired in certain secret schools, in which I was a student when in Paris.

"These schools," he continued, "have existed unknown to the public from the time of Mesmer and St. Germain, who taught far more than they are credited with by the uninformed public. These schools are closely guarded, and none but the deserving can obtain admittance, for the knowledge they reveal would be an awful power for evil in the hands of selfish and malicious persons. I hope, my son, to secure you admittance into this school when you become of age, no one being allowed to enter under the age of twenty-one.

"In the meantime you must graduate as a regular physician, for in this age of superficial knowledge and much for, you could not practice openly as you are therein taught. Therefore you must cloak your practice under the title of a regular, as I do. This title, but at the same time using means which, if know, would be branded as superstitious and make me a charlatan."

When questioned if this secret school was in any way related with the great Brotherhood, he replied that it formed a part of a semi-esoteric section, and that all fourth-degree members sent their children there to get the benefits of both esoteric and exoteric schools.

"Remember, my son," he said, "the members of the fourth degree must seek power and influence in the world; not for their own selfish ends, but in order that they can thus be more potent

instruments for good. Each candidate for membership must be a master of the three great professions, medicine, law, and art.

"This will be more fully explained to you when the proper time comes."

"Was mother, and are women admitted to this school?" I asked.

"Mother was a member, and women are admitted; but while they are exempt from professional practice if they so desire, they must stand all examinations the same as men.

"Mother was a high graduate in art and music, was most skilled in the preparation of drugs and the diagnosis of disease, and was my constant advisor in all difficult cases. At the same time she was acquainted with the laws of nations, the principles of government, and when it came to law in its philosophical aspect had few equals. Remember also, Amphonso, that it was here that I met mother; and in explanation of our remarkably sympathetic natures, I would say that all fourth-degree members of the Brotherhood send a son and daughter to this school, and this practice our brothers before us did for many centuries in the past, wherever their schools might be. The knowledge of the laws of generation imparted in this school enables all who go there from to bring suitable members into their households, each father and mother raising a son and daughter; and thus is the organization perpetuated as the older members pass on to higher degrees where marriage is unknown. With me at Paris was an only sister who married a fellow brother, and from whom I have not heard for twenty years.

"Likewise mother had a brother, who did not marry, but took an exceptional course and passed on. Concerning this I can say no more, but hope you go to Paris you will, like me, find a soul clothed in the feminine sex that will be responsive to your own and fully worthy of your love."

"But," I said, thinking of my lost sister, "How are the gaps filled when there are deaths?"

"That, my son, belongs to the secrets of initiation, which I am not at liberty to give; suffice it to say, there are councils who regulate these matters. And aside from those who are entitled to become members by right of birth, there are those who become such

by adoption."

Seven years thus passed, with me a constant student under my father. Nothing had ever been heard of the Altata from the day of that fateful storm. Not a word concerning mother. Whenever I broached the subject to father he persisted that she still lived, and so far entered into the "Third Degree" whose members were superior to death and lived immortal. "But if this be true," I urged, "why do we not hear something from her?"

"My son, you do not understand," he solemnly replied. "Those of the 'Third Degree' know not the ties of husband, wife, or parent. No individuals, as such, can claim their love, for it is boundless and universal, and belongs to all mankind."

I was now twenty-one years of age, and far advanced in medicine and science.

My love for knowledge had become almost insatiable; but, notwithstanding my intense application to study, I had not been allowed to neglect the requirements of social life.

"For," said my father, "so long as your field of labor is in the social world, you must know its forms and usages. And it is not necessary to sever your studies, but only that barren farce, society without mid, where vanity, frivolity and fashion have shriveled up the heart, and forms conceal the defects of the soul." This participation in the social world was productive of good results: I commenced to analyze its so-called pleasures, and found them all illusions and unsatisfactory.

While participation in them as a matter of form, knowledge, and a desire to solve to some extent, at least, the mysteries of the universe, became my sole ambition. One day we returned home and found a visitor whom, at first sight, from the manner of his dress, I took to be Alvarez, whom I still remembered; I soon found he was another man with a similar style of dress and cloak, but black instead of blue.

Unlike Alvarez, he greeted father with a cordial handshake, and when father introduced him as Monsieur Garcia, from Paris, he immediately commenced a pleasant conversation.

A month passed, and Monsieur Garcia, being almost constantly with me, had become a most intimate friend. At this time father, in a long conversation upon occult subjects, informed me