THE IMMIGRANT'S DAUGHTER: AN ADAPTATION OF

LA GRINGA, BY FLORENCIO SÁNCHEZ

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Florencio Sánchez was born in Montevideo on January 17, 1875. He had a few years of formal education in Minas, but at an early age he had to leave school to go to work. From time to time he wrote for various newspapers, particularly the more radical or revolutionary ones. He never stayed in one place very long, but went back and forth from Montevideo to Buenos Aires and vice versa. He migrated to Rosario, where he began to attend the theatre regularly, and soon he was writing farces and plays to be produced there. His first important play, M'hiio el dotor, was written to prove to his sweetheart's family that its author was worthy of the daughter's hand in marriage. It was a complete success, and he and Catalina Rabentos were married.

From 1903 to 1909 he produced all of his dramatic works: eight longer plays and twelve farces. In the meantime, his health suffered from years of dissipation and irregular living, so he arranged to go to Europe to recover
his health. His conditioned worsened, however, and he died in Italy on November 7, 1910.¹

Sánchez did not found a school and had no literary disciples, but he did introduce realism into the Argentine theatre and demonstrated the possibilities of the use of native material, treated in a new-world manner. He showed the thinking dramatists what really confronted their nation; and he brought together the cultural and popular elements of the native theatre and secured cultured audiences for his plays. One of the greatest services rendered by Sánchez was that of creating in the public a more mature attitude toward such problems as immigration, national differences, and evolution of the native population, which every young nation must confront as it emerges as a world power.²

This thesis is an experiment in adapting a Florencio Sánchez play for staging in English. La Gringa was chosen because it is the best known of Sánchez' works, and because, to this writer's knowledge, no translation of this play is available.

¹John Thomas Lister and Ruth Richardson, editors, La Gringa, by Florencio Sánchez (New York, 1927), pp. vii-xi.
²Ruth Richardson, Sánchez and the Argentine Theatre (New York, 1933), p. 221.
La Gringa is the symbolic drama of the Argentine conscience, the epic of the invasion by the foreigner of the land of the gaucho. Sánchez, in his zeal as a crusading sociologist, directed his attention to four or five main subjects which in some form are the basis of several of his plays. The themes are alcoholism, the rights of motherhood, the need for tolerance, the determination of the gaucho, and the enmity between people of various nationalities. The bitter enmity existing in the region of the Río de la Plata between the criollo and the gringo or Italian elements of the population is indicated at almost every moment when these two groups have any contacts. Sánchez realized that Argentina and Uruguay could not reach their fullest development until this condition was improved. His suggested solution of the problem is intermarriage of the groups.

Because the enmity between the criollos and the Italians is peculiar to the Argentine, the translation of the play has been left in its original setting in order that the audience may become better acquainted with the problems connected with the situation.

3Ibid., p. 89.
4Ibid., p. 169.
5Ibid., pp. 86-87.
There were many problems involved in the translation of *La Gringa*. The words *gringa* or *gringo* and *criollo*, which express concepts of fundamental importance in the play, are difficult to translate because they have different connotations to different nationalities, so the closest possible English equivalents were used. Also difficult to translate were the words *escoba* and *ombú*, often repeated in the play and essential to its understanding. *Escoba* ordinarily means broom, but in this case it is used to denote a card game, so-called because a player may make a sweep or clear the table of cards. The name of a suitable card game in English was substituted. The *ombú* is a tree native to the pampas of South America, and it is a symbol of the old *gaúcho* civilization. *Ombú* is used several times in the translation, but for the most part, the word *ombú* is translated merely as tree. Since many of the main characters in the original are Italians, they speak in loosely-constructed, corrupted Italian-Spanish, the meaning of which is often extremely difficult to convey. The dialogue is in the simple language of the country people, and every effort has been made to translate faithfully this dialogue, and at the same time to present an easy-flowing, natural English dialogue.
The original play is divided into four acts, each of which is divided into numerous scenes. In Spanish drama, each time any actor enters or leaves the stage, a new scene begins. There is no change of scenery involved during an act; there are only changes of people, therefore in the translation, the only divisions retained are those between acts.

Stage directions in Spanish are given from the point of view of the actor, not that of the audience. Salir, therefore, means to enter; entrar, to leave; derecha, left; and izquierda, right. In the adaptation, all stage directions are given from the point of view characteristic of the English-language theatre.

For facility in pronouncing the proper names used in the text, the following guide to approximate pronunciation is offered.

Nicola - Ni-ko'-lah

María - Mah-ree'-ah

Victoria - Veek-tö'-ree-ah

Rosina - Rö-see'-nah

Horacio - Ö-rah'-see-ö

Luiggin - Loo-ee'-jin

Cantalicio - Kahn-tah-lee'-cee-ö
Prospero - Pros'-pay-ro

Margarita - Mar-gah-ree'-tah

Nilda - Neel'-dah

Books not listed in the bibliography, but of invaluable assistance in preparing this adaptation, are:


CHAPTER II

THE IMMIGRANT'S DAUGHTER

Cast of Characters

NICOLA, AN ITALIAN RANCHER          THE DOCTOR
MARIA, HIS WIFE                      THE PRIEST
VICTORIA                           THREE FARM HANDS
          HIS DAUGHTERS
ROSINA                             THE CONTRACTOR
HORACIO                           A LABORER
          HIS SONS
LUIGGIN                            A MASON
CANTALICIO, A POOR NATIVE          A GRAIN DEALER
PROSPERO, HIS SON, IN LOVE WITH VICTORIA
          AN ITALIAN
THE INNKEEPER                      DON PEDRO
MARGARITA, HIS WIFE                CUSTOMERS
NILDA, HIS DAUGHTER                LABORERS, ETC.

The action takes place in the Argentine province of Santa Fe in 1904.
ACT ONE

Don Nicola's Ranch

To the left, there is an exterior facade of an unwhitewashed house of a dirty and weather-worn appearance. There are two windows without grating and a door, and above these, all along the wall, a row of rather dirty pigeon-holes—the pigeon house. Next to the window, in the foreground, there are some earthen jars with plants covered with canvas, because of the cold. To the right there is a building of adobe and straw and a long shed with two doors. At the rear there is a large well with a long watering trough connected with the well by a small pipe; next to the well there is an easy-to-handle pail with a rope. There is a wide view of the lands of the estate, in which one should notice the large black patches of recently plowed land. Suspended from the walls of the hut and of the house are trappings, ropes, pieces of old iron, bags, etc., and on the floor, in disorder, are picks, shovels, rakes, pitchforks, a wheelbarrow, logs, an old plow, benches, and jars. Next to the shed, in the background, there is an anvil with the appropriate tools. It
is mid-winter. As the curtain rises, the rays of the rising sun begin to bathe the facade of the house.

VICT. (In a coarse winter dress, high button shoes, and a shawl wrapped around her head, she appears through the first door on the right and stops in the middle of the stage, undecided, as if remembering something she had forgotten.) Ah! ... (She turns around quickly toward the jars which contain the plants and begins to uncover them.) Oh, this cold! ... this cold! ... (She blows on her numb fingers.)

MARIA. (From within, far off.) Victoria, Victoria! ... Is it time yet? Is it ready? ... (Both this question and the reply must be said in Italian, if possible.)

VICT. (Observing the height of the sun.) Yes, it is time. Can I put up the signal now?

MARIA. Go ahead.

VICT. (She takes a bag from the floor, hooks it on a pitchfork and goes to put it on the curb of the well.)

PROS. (Entering with a plowshare in his hand. He, too, wears coarse clothing; his face is wrapped in a muffler, and his feet are encased in brogans made of sheepskin.) It's high time you put up the signal! ... The
farm hands are already arriving from the low land! . . .

You got up late, eh? . . .

VICT. Well! . . . and what's it to you? . . .

PROS. To me? . . . Nothing. . . If you worked from
two o'clock in the morning and in this cold. . . (Stopping
her.) Good morning, then. . . Speak to a poor fellow. . .

How did you sleep?

VICT. (She makes a wry face.) Silly! . . . (She
puts the plates, spoons, and biscuits in order on a bench.)

PROS. (Turning around.) Will you talk to me? . . .

VICT. I don't know . . .

PROS. You're a little out of sorts, aren't you?

VICT. (Fondly.) Now, just for that, I'm not going
to give you something I was bringing you . . .

PROS. (Interested, going toward her.) What? . . .

Let's see? . . .

VICT. (Concealing something behind her back.) You'd
like to know, wouldn't you?

PROS. Don't be naughty! . . . Show me! . . . (He
tries to seize her arm.)

VICT. Go away! . . .

PROS. I'll take it away from you! . . .

VICT. (Withdrawing.) Look! . . . Fresh bread! . . .
MARIA. (From within.) Girl! ... Are you going to bring me that water? ...

VICT. (Leaving the bread on the bench.) I'm coming!' ... Take it if you want it, but ... I haven't given it to you. (She goes to the well and lowers the bucket.)

PROS. (He takes the bread and divides it into two pieces, which he puts away in his pockets, and turning around to Victoria.) Wait! ... I'll help you! ...

VICT. You don't have to.

PROS. (With pretended authority.) Whether you need it or not, you're going to have my help. ... Go away from there. ... What are you thinking about? Disobedient little girl! ... (He tries to take the rope away from her.)

VICT. Leave me alone, I tell you! Leave me alone! ... I don't want you to! ...

PROS. Well, then, between the two of us ... Let's see! ... U. ... up! ... It's heavy! ... Well, pull! ...

VICT. (Afraid, she goes away a short distance, holding a fathom of rope between her hands, while Prospero picks up the bucket.)

PROS. (After a pause.) The deuce! ... It was empty! ...
VICT. That's not true! . . .

PROS. Look! . . .

VICT. (She stoops to look, and Próspero seizes the opportunity to give her a noisy kiss.) Wise guy! . . .
(She hits him on the shoulder with her rope. The bucket falls into the well again.)

PROS. (Joyfully.) Ha! Ha! . . . That really hurts! . . . That's what you get for being a girl! . . . (He goes toward the anvil and begins to sharpen the plowshare.)

MARIA. (She appears with a bucket of milk. She must keep her marked Italian accent.) Good morning, Próspero. Do you have much to do now? . . . Do me a favor . . . huh?, while they are drinking their mate, take the black cow down to the little pasture for some alfalfa . . . (Próspero continues his task.) Confounded cow! . . . Look at the little bit of milk she's giving . . . One drop . . . She's not worth the trouble to milk her. . . And in spite of the fact I feed her every day. . . Victoria! . . . Have you fixed coffee for the old man and the children?

VICT. (With four or five tin cups and spoons in one hand, and some biscuits in the other.) I can't do everything at the same time, mama . . . The things are ready . . . coffee . . . boiling water.
MARIA. Lazy bones! ... I told you that this morning. Get up! ... Get up! ... And you—nothing! If you didn't sleep so much, you'd have time to spare... I'm going to tell your father. Since you came from Rosario, you have been playing the great lady...

VICT. (She begins to hum.)

MARIA. Shameless hussy! ... Get that ready and bring me a bucket of water. Immediately! ... (She takes the bucket of milk and goes off to the right muttering.)

PROS. (Mischiefously.) Ho! Ho! Ho! ... (With his back turned to Victoria, he strikes the anvil, as if he were working, and he sings some popular tune.) Well done! Well done! I'm very happy! ...

VICT. Here! ... Look what I am doing... (She is wiping off his kiss with her sleeve.)

PROS. Ha! You'll get it rubbed off some day! ... (He takes the plowshare and goes off to the left. Victoria draws the bucket again. Outside she hears various voices and metallic clinking. The workers, with their plows, are arriving to have breakfast. Victoria changes the water to another bucket and quickly takes it to María.)

VICT. (Before withdrawing.) Mama, they're already here! ...
NIC. Yes. Of course! Of course! ... Animals have no feelings, eh?

1ST FARM HAND. Look, Nicola. I tell you that mare is very clever. Early this morning, when I tied her, she almost broke a single-tree by kicking ... 

NIC. (Pulling off his thick green gloves.) But that is no reason for you to whip her, do you understand me? Do you think mares are people ... and that they understand things when they are whipped?

1ST FARM HAND. No but ... 

NIC. Enough. Don't say any more ... (The other farm hands, who are wearing clothes similar to those which Próspero is wearing, are entering slowly. Some have trappings and tools in their hands, which they scatter helter-skelter on the ground. Nicola sits on a block of wood or a bench; he takes out his pipe, fills it, lights it slowly, and begins to untie his brogans; Victoria appears with a boiling pot of mate and she begins to fill the cups. One by one the farm hands take them, with the ration of biscuits, and they scatter out on the patio, seating themselves on the floor to eat breakfast. There is a prolonged pause.) Tell me, Ramón, is the plowing going all right in the back field of Big Hill? ...
2nd Farm Hand. No sir. I think we ought to leave that piece until it rains. It's breaking plows and killing animals all for nothing. The earth is very dry.

Nic. Well, go now to the stubble of the farthest end of the alfalfa field... It'll go better... Victoria! Bring me my boots... and tell Luiggin to hitch up the old dappled horse to the wagon. I'm going to town. Hasn't Luiggin come yet? Where is that boy? (Victoria leaves by the left door and returns immediately with the boots.)

Maria. (Surprised.) Oh!... Are they coming for coffee or not?... It's been ready for an hour.

Nic. Wait a minute... Confound it... (He puts on his boots.)

Vict. Do you want your other coat?

Nic. Of course... (Victoria goes away again.)

Luiggin. (He comes rushing in with a hare in his hand. Upon seeing Nicola, he tries to hide it.) Hello.

Nic. What is that? What is that?...

Luig. Nothing... A hare... 

Nic. You scoundrel. You've been tiring the mare, eh?

Luig. That's not true... 

Nic. What?
LUIG. I mean, no, sir. The dogs grabbed it. I didn't chase it... It went through the alfalfa field and...

NIC. (Threateningly.) The dogs, did you say?... the dogs... so...

LUIG. Wel-l-l... Oh, papa! There is a steer missing from the alfalfa pasture...

NIC. (Reacting.) What? What?...

LUIG. A steer. The white steer. I suspect that strayed to Cantalicio's pasture.

NIC. Strayed?... Hum!... Strayed or stolen!...

PROS. (Getting up.) Listen, Nicola... My father isn't a thief for you to talk like that... Understand?

NIC. I didn't say that he stole it... It could have been someone else...

PROS. (Sitting down.) Hum!... Okay!

MARIA. (Appearing again.) Well, aren't you coming to have coffee? I'm not to blame if it's cold... The devil with these people... Do they think we are in a hotel?...

NIC. Wait... (Victoria appears with a corduroy coat. Nicola takes off his coat and his muffler and changes. Meanwhile, Rosina enters. She is a little girl
about ten or twelve years old. Hiding her left hand, she approaches one of the farm hands and asks him something. He gives her a knife and the little girl sits down on the ground, in the foreground. Then she shows her bloody hand, at which she picks with the point of the knife.)

VICT. Good; let's go drink some coffee, because Mama is angry... Come on, Luiggin... Come on... (Nicola and Luiggin withdraw.) Rosina? ... (Calling.) Rosina!...

ROS. Here I am! ... Wait a minute...

VICT. What are you doing? (She goes to the girl, and when she sees the blood, she screams.) Child! ... What have you done to yourself? ... My God! ...

ROS. Nothing... It was just a splinter on the plow handle... When I went like this... I pricked myself.

VICT. Oh! ... How awful! ... Heavens!

NIC. (Reappearing.) What's going on? What are those shouts?

VICT. This poor little girl... Goodness!

NIC. (Alarmed.) What's this? ... (He examines the girl's hand, and then makes an impatient gesture.) Bah! What a trifling matter! ... It isn't anything! ... Foolishness! ... Come drink your coffee...
ROS. That's what I said! ... A trifle. ... (She
licks her wound and makes her exit with Nicola and Vic-
toria.)

1ST FARM HAND. Ugh! Cursed immigrants! ... Rolling
in money and making these poor little girls work. ...

2ND FARM HAND. Well, that's why they have money,
so ... .

1ST FARM HAND. Of course! ... Look at that little
girl. ... I swear she has cut a vein. ... and her parents
are so unconcerned. ... She should be my daughter! ...

2ND FARM HAND. Or mine. ... To make these poor little
girls get up at two o'clock in the morning, in this cold
weather, so that they can work like slaves. . .

3RD FARM HAND. And the poor kids work like full-
grown men. ... Say! ... Do you suppose there is any more
mate? (He goes to the kettle and serves himself another
cup of mate.)

2ND FARM HAND. You're right. They are foreigners
and that is all there is to it. When that is said, every-
thing is said.

PROS. (Getting up.) What fault-finders you are! ... 
If you were owners of the ranch, you would make even the
cats work. ... Get along with you! ...
1ST FARM HAND. Man! . . . Not me.

PROS. Ah! . . . You. . . What a chance! . . . Your sons would be members of Parliament and your daughters . . . dressmakers at least. . . Be quiet. . . What do you know! . . . Just find anyone of these little Italian girls and you will see what a woman she will turn out to be. . . What a companion for anyone . . . accustomed to working and the hardships of life, capable of any sacrifice for their husband or for their children. . . I wish that all us native and Italian children could mix together and you would see what offspring!

2ND FARM HAND. Listen to him! . . . Why don't you just marry the boss's daughter? . . .

PROS. Quiet. . .

1ST FARM HAND. Don't you think that we've seen you embracing her by the well? . . .

PROS. (Approaching threateningly.) Well. If you have seen me, you have seen me . . . but careful with your tongue . . .

2ND FARM HAND. Don't be afraid. . . You know, brother, that . . .

3RD FARM HAND. Say, Prospero. . . Here comes someone on horseback who looks like your father. . .
PROS. (Hastening to look.) Yes, it is. Get off, Dad. . . (He leaves by left rear.)

(The farm hands, still eating, get up, put their cups on the bench, pick up their tools, whips, and trappings, adjust their clothes. Some may pause to sharpen their plows on the grindstone. They all leave the stage slowly in the next few minutes.)

MARIA. Do me a favor, Prospero! . . . Oh! . . . Has he already gone? . . .

1ST FARM HAND. No, Ma'am. Old Cantalicio has just arrived, and he went to greet him. . .

MARIA. Good. Tell him, eh?, not to forget to take the black cow to the pasture . . . and to take the calf with it, too, eh? . . . and to bring me the other cow, that yellow one, okay? (She goes off to the left.)

1ST LAB. Don't worry! (To the others.) Say, get a load of that! . . . The yellow cow! . . . Why didn't she ask for a purple cow? . . . (Laughter.)

PROS. Come right in, Dad.

CANT. It's a miracle that there aren't any dogs. . . These immigrants know how to teach their dog packs to bite and nip the natives. Good day! . . . There is no one here, eh?
PROS. They are all drinking coffee. Sit down here. I'm going because I have a lot to do...

CANT. No; wait a minute. We have to talk a while. I don't suppose that they will punish you because you tarry a little...

PROS. If it's very urgent... okay.

VICT. (Dragging Rosina.) Come take care of that hand...

ROS. I want to take the splinter out myself...

If you do it, you'll hurt me...

VICT. Come wash it first... (Seeing Cantalicio.) Hello!... How are you?...

CANT. (Drily.) Well enough.

VICT. Are you looking for papa?... He's coming now... Sit down... (She takes a bench to him.) Papa is finishing breakfast... What kind of miracle brings you here!...

CANT. It's a miracle, all right. What's happened to that child...

ROS. (With visible pride.) See, I ran a big splinter into my hand. Here; look!

CANT. (Distracted.) That's good! (Victoria impatiently seizes the child by her arm and goes out to the left.)
PROS. What have they done to you, Dad, that you
treat them this way? . . .

CANT. To me . . . nothing. And what have I done to
you that you treat me this way? . . .

(Aside.) It's better that I go away. . .

CANT. What are you mumbling about? . . .

PROS. I said that if we come back to the same old
subject . . . it's better that I go to work . . .

CANT. I've told you to wait! . . . Here comes that
immigrant! . . .

NIC. (With his pipe in his mouth.) Ramón! Ramón!
. . . Oh! . . . Good morning. . . How are you, Cantalicio?
. . . All right, eh? (He extends his hand to him.)

CANT. (Extending his hand with reluctance.) My health
is fine. . .

NIC. That's good. (Sententiously.) In this world
. . . in this world health is the first consideration.

Having it, the rest is . . . work . . . strong hands . . .

CANT. (Aside.) Good claws to rob. . .

NIC. (To Próspero.) Has Ramón come yet? . . . Well . . .
nothing! . . . (To Canalicio.) It's cold, isn't it?

CANT. Fairly. . .
NIC. A terrible frost. . . And it's not even thinking about raining. . . The ground is as hard as a rock! . . . It breaks the plows. . .

CANT. That's the way it goes. . .

NIC. Okay, okay. . . Well. . . You came for something, didn't you?

CANT. Yes, sir.

NIC. (Knocking the ashes from his pipe.) Good! . . . How is your business going? . . .

CANT. Like the devil! . . .

NIC. Okay. . . (He rubs his hands.) You came to speak to me, right? Well. . . I'm going to my room, to look for the papers, eh? You will pardon me for a little while. . . Excuse me. (He goes away, rubbing his hands.)

CANT. You have seen the immigrant. . . Look how happy he is. He has suspected that I'm not bringing him the money. . . Hum!

PROS. I don't know what you're talking about. . .

CANT. Don't pretend that you don't know. . . you're a partner of his now. . . Don't you know that yesterday all the notes which I signed fell due . . . and that I don't have anything to pay him with? . . .

PROS. Oh? . . . It's not my fault. . .
CANT. Heartless brute! He's going to take away the land... and the house... and everything...

PROS. And?...

CANT. (Disturbed.) All of that is yours, too... and both of us will be without anything...

PROS. As if I ever had anything!

CANT. Look, Prospero... Don't start that again...
I'm beginning to believe that you've lost the little affection you used to have for me... Come sit down by me... Does it seem right to you that from morning to night, an immigrant, who isn't even an Argentine, appears in the house where you were born and where your parents were reared... and where your grandparents lived... he appears and says, "Out of here"? This ranch is no longer yours, nor is that field yours, nor those trees, nor those pastures, nor are those fences yours... (Moved with emotion.)
Do you think that's right and just?...

PROS. I don't say that it's just, Dad. I say... that it's not my fault... You know I've been on my own for a long time. I've never meddled in your affairs...

CANT. I know that very well, but...

PROS. And if I could pay Nicola what you owe him, I would gladly do it...
CANT. Then you believe that I must remain so indifferent and let these people take over my home.

PROS. What else is there to do? If you had given me the little field when I asked you for it in order to sow it, you wouldn't have found yourself in this fix; but you insisted on continuing to pasture those worthless native cows which now aren't even worth insulting, and taking care of your race-horses and constantly staying in town, and spending all your time gambling. . . and in the long run there is no comparison. . .

CANT. Is that so? . . . I wasn't expecting that from you. . . To arrive at this age so that even the youngsters sass me. . . Go away from here, you traitor! . . .

PROS. No, Dad. Don't be like that. . . That's just the way it is. . .

CANT. No, it isn't! . . . That's just the way it is, eh? You've sold out to the immigrants! . . . Why don't you put an earring in your ear and a whistle in your mouth and go around bothering people? . . . Renegade! . . . You poor excuse for a son! . . .

NIC. (Appearing with a shotgun on his shoulder and a roll of papers in one hand.) What is this! . . . What is this! . . .
CANT. Nothing, sir.

NIC. Trouble with the boy, eh? ... Well... He's not a bad boy! ... A good worker ... honorable ... okay... Well... here we have the papers.

CANT. And why are you carrying a shotgun? ... Do you think I'm some kind of bandit? ...

NIC. What an idea! You are a good man ... a good native son ... I am carrying the gun just in case I need it... Since I'm going to town, eh? A hare is always to be found ... a partridge on the road... Tell me. Have you seen a white steer in your pasture?

CANT. Yes, and I have just driven it this way... Well. Let's see if we can arrange this...

NIC. Let's see if we can arrange this! I like very straight business dealings, understand? ... (He examines the papers slowly.) Three thousand ... three thousand ... and seven hundred ... that's three thousand seven hundred, isn't it? ... and five hundred ... four thousand two hundred ... and four hundred and fifty more ... those, do you remember? a small promissory note ... Well; the total is four thousand six hundred and fifty national dollars ... eh? (While Nicola makes his count, Victoria passes in the background with a sieve sifting grain.
Prospero follows her with a look and in a little while he goes away too.)

CANT. Exactly right... You certainly haven't left out anything...

NIC. And now, let's go to town... to the notary... and you'll give me the money... and I'll mark the notes paid... I mean, if you're bringing me the money...

CANT. I haven't got it... You know that better than I do...

NIC. Well, what are we going to do... It's up to you...

CANT. A renewal... Look... frankly, I was going to ask you to give me a year's extension of time... at any interest you want...

NIC. A year?... a year?... Look... You're a good man, understand?... a good native son... but you don't understand a thing about business... A year?

That's asking too much!

CANT. Why not? Who has told you...

NIC. I'm going to be frank, understand? If you can't pay me now, within a year you'll be able to pay me even less.

CANT. What do you know about it?
NIC. Bah! . . . That's nonsense . . . If I didn't know these things . . .

CANT. So then you want to take the land away from me?

NIC. Well. To tell you the truth . . . You are right. . . And that is a deal advantageous to you. I need this tract of land. My son, who is studying to be an engineer in Buenos Aires, has asked me to look for land because he wants to come put up a farm or a creamery or something like that. . . Think it over. . . At any rate this little bit of land is lost. Since next year or the next . . . you will have to turn it over to me, you might as well give it to me now and save the interest. . .

CANT. (Walking around nervously.) And if I take a notion not to pay you or to give you the land now or any time? . . .

NIC. (Scratching his head craftily.) If you take a notion not to. . . That's a horse of another color. . .

CANT. And go off to town and bring a devil of a lawsuit against you!

NIC. Oh! . . . No! . . . One does not trifle with the mortgage, dear friend. . .
CANT. (Aside.) Why not? ... You'll see... I know a lawyer who is going to cause you a lot of trouble! ... (To Nicola.) So you can't wait?

NIC. It wouldn't be to my advantage...

CANT. This is your last word? ... Okay. Protest, demand... do what you want. I won't pay and I won't give you the land. That's settled.

NIC. All right. But you'll see that you're hurting yourself, won't you? ...

CANT. The less you have of a bad thing, the better! ... Good-bye... 

NIC. Listen, friend... Listen! ... It's for your own good! (Excited voices are heard from the right background. Nicola and Cantalicio stop.)

MARRIA. (She appears with Victoria, dragging her by the arm.) Immodest girl! ... Shameless hussy! ... Bad daughter! ... March! ... (As Victoria resists, she slaps her face.) You hussy! ...

NIC. What is this? ... What is this? ... (Intervening.) Victoria! ... What have you done?

MARRIA. Imagine! ... I was going to the corral to look for a small rope which I had forgot, and suddenly I
saw this hussy (she gives her a slap.) who had just kissed this saddle tramp, that . . . his son . . . Upstart! . . .

CANT. Listen to her! . . .

NIC. What is this? . . . What is this? . . . Próspero was kissing her? . . .

MARIA. Yes, Próspero! . . .

NIC. Oh, no! Oh, no! And where is that fresh guy? (Calling.) Próspero! . . . Oh! . . . Próspero! . . .

PROS. (Seriously.) Were you calling me, boss?

NIC. Well, sir . . .

MARIA. What do you mean sir? . . . He is a fresh boy, a rascal, a farm hand! . . .

NIC. Will you shut up? . . . Look. . . Is this the way to act with decent people? What do you think this is . . . the house of a tramp like yourself?

CANT. Oh! Tone down your language, you damned immigrant! . . .

NIC. . . . As you well know, eh? Look, what have you got into your head? . . .

PROS. Nothing, sir . . .

NIC. Nothing, eh? Good. Then go get your things right now and get out, do you understand? (To Victoria.) And you, you hussy. . . . (Pushing her.) Go inside, for I'm going to settle a few things with you. . . .
FROS. (Intervening.) Look, sir. Not so fast with her. Hell! . . . We haven't done anything wrong. It's just that . . . we love each other and I'm ready to work in order to marry her.

NIC. What is this? . . . What is this? . . . I said to get out. . . . Immediately! . . . Marry her! . . . You'd like to marry the girl so you could grab the money . . . the dollars which we all have earned by working . . . like dogs! . . . Now! Get out! . . . Lazy bones! . . . Learn to work first. . . . All I need, after so much sacrifice to scrape together a little savings, is for someone to want it for himself. . . . Get out. . . . (Próspero makes a movement as if to throw himself on Nicola. Cantalicio restrains him. María pushes Victoria toward the left. Nicola follows behind, speaking and shaking his head.) So he wants to marry you! . . . Marry you for your inheritance, is that it? For the inheritance of an old immigrant . . . so he can spend it in the gambling houses and gamble it away on the races. . . . Lazy tramp! . . . (He goes away mumbling.) Get out! . . . Learn to work first.

CURTAIN
ACT TWO

In the Inn

This act takes place in an inn of the town. We look upon the dining room and barroom; a door at the back, which opens on the street, and one or two doors to the right and left, which communicate with the interior; a counter and a bar with bottles; a profusion of tables, one of which is long and is occupied by the customers who are eating lunch. At other tables there are people drinking appetizers, reading newspapers, or simply chatting. In one of these last groups, there is a priest. A stout man, the innkeeper, is behind the counter; and a girl, his daughter, is serving the tables. The walls of the barroom are covered with posters of farm machines, pictures of the Italian kings, etc. A large lamp and garlands of colored paper hang from the ceiling. There should be a window communicating with the kitchen.

(As the curtain rises, there is a great uproar. A group of settlers, in corduroy suits, are engrossed in the last stages of a game of murra.*)

*A game, popular among the Italians, in which two players call numbers below ten and at the same time open a certain number of fingers of the closed hand.
Three!...
Four!...
Two!...

SETTLERS. Three!...
Two!...
Three!...

It's all over. (Laughter and exclamations.)

IMMIGRANT. Innkeeper!... A bottle of Barbers!...

INNKEEPER. Right away!...

PRIEST. (Leaving his newspaper.) Are you through yelling? It was about time!... (Approaching the group.)
You, doctor... What do you say to a little game of rummy?
You owe me a return game from last night...

DOCTOR. We could play it with four...

PRIEST. That's true. (To a customer.) Will you play, Pedro?...

1ST CUSTOMER. To pass the time away... Why not?

PRIEST. We still lack another player... Will you join us?

2ND CUSTOMER. I can't; I have to go to the station.
I am going to accompany Próspero, Cantalicio's son. He is going to Rosario for good.
NILDA. (Coming to the little window.) One order of veal. . . Two vegetable soups! . . . One dessert! . . .
(She returns with several plates and serves several customers.)

PRIEST. Heavens! And how do we play? . . . (To the innkeeper.) Will you join us? You and I will play Pedro and the doctor.

INNKEEPER. Of course! I'm going to serve these drunks some Barbera, then I'll be right back! . . . (He goes to the settlers' table with bottles, glasses, and cork screw.)

PRIEST. Here, no more at this table. Nilda! Nilda! Bring the cards. They ought to be here already, girl. They ought to be here already. . .

NILDA. It isn't as if I were God and could be everywhere at once! . . . (She searches for the cards on the counter and returns with them. Meanwhile, the innkeeper uncorks the bottle and serves wine to the settlers who receive it with a great show of merriment.)

VOICES. Hurrah for wine! . . . Hurrah for Garibaldi! . . .

PRIEST. (Turning around.) What? Why Garibaldi? Never mind him! . . . Look, tomorrow is a holiday and you will have to go to mass. . .
INNKEEPER. (Approaching.) Here I am. . . Let me see, Father; I hope you're playing in good form. . . .

PRIEST. It's my deal. . . (He deals the cards. Pause. The settlers, glasses in hand, sing some nostalgic Piedmontese airs. The customers listen attentively, with the exception of the priest and his companions who are still absorbed in the game. Before the singing ends, a laborer enters and sits down near the counter, striking it loudly with the handle of a cattle whip.)

LABORER. Ain't there anyone to serve me here? . . . Let's see, now! . . .

INNKEEPER. She will be right there, sir! . . . It certainly takes an Argentine to make a noise! . . . Nilda, see what that man wants! . . . (He continues playing.)

NILDA. What will you have? . . .

LABORER. Gin with bitters . . .

NILDA. (Serving him rapidly.) Here you are . . . that will be twenty cents . . .

LABORER. (After draining the glass.) Tell me, girl. . . The doctor has not dropped in here, I suppose. . .

NILDA. Dr. Buottini. . . There he is--don't you see him?
LABORER. I didn't see him. (Approaching the group.) Hello, doctor... I was looking for you to see if you would go to the Bertoni ranch, because there is a very sick person there.

PRIEST. (Alarmed.) What? A Bertoni is ill? Which one of them? Poor fellow! ...

LABORER. It isn't any of the settlers... It's one of the farm hands, a young man from Córdoba... 

PRIEST. Oh! ... That's another matter, then...

LABORER. What do you mean, another matter? If a Christian is ill, it doesn't matter if he's rich or poor...

DOCTOR. And what's the matter with that farm hand?

LABORER. He's very sick, doctor... Day before yesterday he treated an animal that died with black leg and now he's got a sore on his arm...

DOCTOR. An abscess! ...

LABORER. That must be it...

DOCTOR. Okay... Tell Bertoni that I'll see if I can go this afternoon...

LABORER. But doctor... Why, his arm is all puffed up and if you don't operate on it immediately, he'll die...

DOCTOR. What do you want me to do? I'm very busy! I can't...
LABORER. (Half-aside.) Busy! . . . Busy! . . . I'll bet that if Bertoni was the sick one or some other rich foreigner, you'd hustle through the cornfields. . . Look, doctor. . . Do us this service. . . That poor boy is going to die. . . I assure you that we can pay you what it'll be. . .

DOCTOR. All right. . . Wait for me over there. When I finish here we'll go. . . (Picking up the cards from the table.) Gin! . . .

LABORER. Okay! . . . (To Nilda.) Girl, will you give me another little nip of gin? (Nilda serves him. One of the singing settlers asks for a pack of cards, and the group starts another game of rummy.)

María and Victoria, loaded down with packages, emerge from the door in the background. They wear their Sunday best, but in poor taste.

MARIÁ. (Depositing the packages on a table.) Greetings to everyone. . . Uf! My, but I'm tired! How are you, Father? Doctor! Pedro! (Upon greeting the innkeeper.) And is Margarita well? . . .

NILDA. (Who has already greeted Victoria.) She is fine, María. I'll call her. . .
MARIA. How are you, child? . . . Don't disturb her. . . Bring me a little something to drink. . . I'm terribly thirsty.

PRIEST. Where is Nicola?

MARIA. He's coming right away. He's in the notary's office seeing about some matters. . . (To Victoria.) Sit down, child. . . It seems as if you never get tired! . . . Or do you want to go look out the door? . . .

NILDA. (After serving the refreshments.) Mama! Mama! Come here--Nicola's wife is here! . . .

1ST DINNER. Nilda! . . . Nilda! . . . Aren't you ever going to serve me?

NILDA. I'm here. What else do you want? . . .

1ST DINNER. An order of breast . . .

2ND DINNER. So do I . . .

NILDA. (Suddenly at the little window.) Two orders of breast. . .

PRIEST. (Turning around.) Of lamb.

MARGARITA. (Who appears drying her hands on her apron.) How are you, María? . . . Please pardon me--my hands are wet. . .

MARIA. Oh! Think nothing of it! . . . (They embrace and kiss each other effusively.)
MARGA. Sit down--have a seat. . . How is your health? . . .

MARIA. So-so! For now it's good, thank you. . . I see that you are a little fat now, eh?

MARGA. And what miracle brings you here? . . .

MARIA. It really is a miracle. . . I wasn't intending to come to town, but Victoria kept saying "let's go" until I finally gave in. She wanted to buy a dress, and we have just spent a lot of money; how things do cost, eh? . . . a lot of expense for the daughter. . . I certainly don't know what this girl does with her clothes. . . Last year I bought her the dress she has on. . . and now she says it's no good. . . Now Testaseca's has sold me this material. . . Look at it; what do you think? . . . (She unwraps a package and both examine minutely the material.) It is good, but it is terribly expensive. . . and now she has the notion that the dressmaker should make the dress. . . And I tell her no. . . Why spend hard-earned money if we can sew it ourselves? . . . She won't be in style, but she will be properly dressed. . . What do you think about that? . . . This girl here has all sorts of crazy ideas in her head. . .

MARGA. Say. . . Is Nicola in town, too?
MARIA. We came with him in the wagon. . . He had to arrange the lawsuit with old Cantalicio. . . that swindler . . . he brought suit against him . . . in order not to pay lawyers and a justice of the peace, and witnesses, and I don't know what all. . . Nicola had to go to Córdoba and Rosario. . . But the old man had the papers. . . And he won the lawsuit in court. . . But it cost him lots of money. . . Look, Margarita, you can't do business with these native sons; they are a bunch of swindlers. . . They don't earn their money like we do. . . (There is a disturbance at the table that Nilda is serving. When she comes to the table with the plates, one of the customers takes liberties with her, and Nilda, letting a plate fall, hits him on the nose.)

NILDA. (Striking him.) Fresh! . . . Impudent! . . .
(Laughter, confusion of voices.)

INNKEEPER. (Interrupting the game without moving.)
Tell me something, Dago! . . . When are you going to stop imposing on my patience? And are you going to carry on until I calm you down some day? What do you expect, eh? . . .

MARGA. Now let's see if this business will stop. He is always doing something to annoy the girl. . . The fresh fellow! . . . Does he think my daughter is a hussy? My
goodness! . . . If he keeps on this way, he'll have to change inns. . .

MARIA. Let it go, Margarita. . . Let it go. . .
These fresh fellows aren't worth a row. . . They imagine that all women are the same. . . The same thing happened to me in Victoria's case. . . Our friend, Cantalicio's son, was really getting out of line . . . consequently, he was thrown out. . . But the girl . . .

NILDA. (Who is returning from the little window.) Mama! . . . They are calling for you in the kitchen. . .

MARIA. Go ahead. . . Don't mind me. . . if you will excuse me, I'll go loosen this uncomfortable dress. . .

MARGA. Of course . . . Of course. . .

MARIA. (To Victoria.) You come too! . . .

VICT. No; I'm going to stay here. . . What would I do inside? . . .

MARIA. No! No! No! . . . Now you go right inside. . .
(Victoria does so unwillingly, turning her eyes toward the door and stopping long enough to see Próspero.)

PROS. (Dressed in his suit, he seems nervous and happy, greeting all the customers cheerfully, and finally he goes to the priest's table.) Greetings, gentlemen! . . .

How's the game going? Who's losing?
PRIEST. Hello, Próspero. So you're going away, eh?

PROS. Yes, sir. Right away on the train to Rosario. To make my home elsewhere! . . .

PRIEST. Don't go in the wrong direction, boy. . . Don't go in the wrong direction. . . The thing to do now is to behave yourself. Deal, doctor. . . That Mr. Daples is a fine person, and if he likes you, you'll go a long way with him. . .

PROS. Exactly! He has faith in me . . . But it has to be for something. . . If I were good for nothing, he wouldn't protect me. . . Dad hasn't come yet? We agreed to meet here. . . Poor old man! . . . He's not at all pleased because I'm going away. . . He says that I'm a renegade, I've sold myself out to the immigrants, and that I'm abandoning him, now that he's poor. . .

PRIEST. The worries of an old man, that's all. . .

PROS. It's natural! . . . (Seeing that Victoria has appeared timidly at the door.) How are you, Victoria? . . . (He signals for her to come closer.) Is your mother well? . . .

VICT. (In a low voice.) You're going away now?

PROS. There's nothing else I can do. . . I swear that I have done everything possible to stay. . .
VICT. No, you have not done everything possible! If you really loved me...

PROS. That is what you do not understand... It is because I love you very much that I'm going away... to work... and to make something of myself... and to earn money in order to deserve you...

VICT. I don't think that's necessary...

PROS. But your father does. Do you think I have forgotten those insults?...

VICT. Why don't you work here? (Fondly.) Now, you're going away and you'll never think of me again... When you see other girls in Rosario who are much prettier and better educated, you'll forget all about me...

PROS. (Upset.) No, sweetheart, don't say that! Why, you're the only thing in the world I've ever loved!...

VICT. (Regretfully.) I'm going to be very, very sad... all alone... Without seeing you...

PROS. (Troubled.) You have the consolation of knowing that I'll never forget you...

MARIA. (Appearing.) Oh!... Victorina... (Próspero leaves quickly. Victoria, head lowered, remains enraptured.) Victorina!... What were you doing talking with that good-for-nothing fellow? Answer me... You're
itching for a thrashing, aren't you? Well, I'm going to
give it to you right away. . . Go inside. . . (While her
mother is speaking to her, Victoria's expression changes
and she finally breaks into sobs. At that moment a quarrel
breaks out among the foreign settlers. María pushes Vic-
toria off the stage.)

PROS. (He looks upon the scene with emotion, then
pulls himself together.) It's about time for the train
to arrive. (To the 2nd customer.) Let's go, eh?

2ND CUSTOMER. Yes, it's time! . . .

PROS. I'd hate not to say good-bye to the old man...
Well . . . Gentlemen, until we meet again! (He shakes
hands with the priest and his companions, who say good-
bye to him with great affection.) Good-bye gentlemen! . . .

VOICES. (From different tables.) Good luck! . . .
Have a good trip! . . . I wish you happiness! . . . Come
back soon! . . . (Próspero happily distributes his atten-
tion. On reaching the door he meets Cantalicio.)

PROS. Dad . . . I was going without saying good-bye...

CANT. Don't swear it, because I believe you. . . Why
should you bother about a poor peasant? If I were an im-
migrant! . . .
PROS. Bah! . . . That's a foolish idea! . . . Leave off all that nonsense, Dad! You certainly have it in for the immigrants! . . .

CANT. Well, why shouldn't I, damn it! . . .

PROS. (Slapping him on the shoulder.) We'll see, we'll see who is more right . . . (Pause.) Well, it's already late. Give me an embrace, Dad. . .

CANT. Are you really going? . . .

PROS. Did you think I was joking? . . .

CANT. And you are leaving me alone, now that I don't even have a house? . . .

PROS. How can I help it? Embrace me. . . Until we meet again. . .

CANT. No, I will not embrace you! . . . Go right now. . . Go. . . Go. . .

PROS. As you wish. . . (Prospero leaves. Cantalicio follows him with his eyes.)

CANT. Poor boy! He's not bad! . . . But he has turned against me. (To the laborer.) Doesn't it seem that way to you, friend?

LABORER. Probably, just as you say! . . .

CANT. (Pulling himself together.) Haven't you found the doctor yet? . . .
LABORER. I'm waiting for him. . . . He says that he is busy. . . .

CANT. Oh, I see . . . busy playing cards. . . . Why, he must be heartless. . . . Come on, friend . . . let's have a drink. . . . (They go to the tables where the foreigners have been.) Who's serving here? . . . (Nilda approaches.) What do you want to drink? . . .

LABORER. The same thing for me.

NILDA. Gin with bitters. . . .

CANT. So do I; good and strong. I feel like drinking something strong. . . . By all means! . . . That's all I'm good for now. . . . A drinking spree! . . .

LABORER. Don't say that. . . . A real man can handle his troubles. . . .

CANT. Great Scott! . . . And drinking has been made for men, too. . . . These will be the last drinks I'll take in this miserable town. . . .

LABORER. Then you've really decided to leave. . . .

CANT. And what do you want me to do? . . . I wasn't born to be a parasite, friend . . . to go on living in someone else's nest. . . . They've thrown me out of mine. . . . And you already see the birds in the nest. . . . That boy, the only thing I have in the world in the way of a family,
like an ingrate he's ordered me to get out! . . . (Nilda serves the drinks. Cantalicio downs the gin in one gulp.)

LABORER. He'll come back. Who knows what'll happen if things don't go right for him! . . . The young man is just restless! . . .

CANT. I'll never see him again. . . Now he's gone to the city, and he'll be just like all of those foreigners, and he'll forget all about me. If everything goes right for him, he's even capable of being ashamed of the old man who raised him. . .

LABORER. By Jove, you really like the foreigners, don't you! . . . It seems to me you do! . . .

CANT. We have reason enough! . . . Look, friend. . . All that plain from that side of town up to Chañarito has belonged to us, the Gonzálezes, the old González family. Natives of Córdoba since the time of independence, friend! . . . And one day one piece, another day another, and they have been grabbing up the land in order to plow it. . . A pity, my friend, to break up those fields where the grass grew as pretty as could be. . . (He gulps down in one swallow another glass of gin which Nilda serves him.)

LABORER. Don't drink that so fast, friend. . . Look out, because it's tricky! . . .
CANT. Never mind. . . Yes, sir. . . And they've just taken away my last plot of land; those thieves have just snatched it away from me. . . This very minute! . . . It's enough to make all us natives ashamed. . . (He strikes the table hard.)

PRIEST. Don't get excited, Cantalicio! . . . Let's have a little order!

CANT. Oh! . . . They even want to deprive me of that. . . Well, that's just fine! . . . It means that because I'm a native son I have fewer rights than all of you who spend the day here shouting and singing as if it was a Basque inn. I can strike whatever I want to, because I am a native son, do you hear?

PRIEST. I was only joking Cantalicio. . . Just to see what you would say. . .

CANT. All right. If it's that way, I haven't said anything. (Becoming haughty again.) But you all know . . .

LABORER. Sit down, friend! . . . They're not worth the trouble. . .

CANT. All right. (sitting down.) Hum!

LABORER. Then, as I was saying . . .

CANT. Serve me some more gin. . . Straight. . .

LABORER. Don't drink any more! . . . You will kill yourself. . .
CANT. Leave me alone.

LABORER. (Distracting him.) Then, you sold your little piece of land? . . .

CANT. They took it away from me; haven't I told you that? . . . I brought a lawsuit against the immigrant. . . And I was right. . . But, those devils, with their money, bribed the judges, the attorneys, and that pack of notaries. . . The lawsuit drug on, but without signs of ending and then we reached an agreement. I've already signed . . . and I'm waiting for the old immigrant who is to hand over the . . . little money that I have left. . .

LABORER. What do you intend to do? . . .

CANT. Me? I'm going to Cordoba. . . Far away! I'm going where I won't see any foreigners! . . . To build a house in the heart of the mountains, although there won't be anything but foxes there. . . At least those won't be immigrants! . . . Will you serve me, or won't you? . . .

PRIEST. Listen, Cantalicio. . . Do you know the eleventh commandment? . . .
CANT. I don't know but ten, unless you have invented another so as to collect more at funerals . . .

PRIEST. The eleventh is "Don't Get Drunk."

CANT. If you weren't a priest, I'd answer that . . . Pardon . . . (After emptying the third glass, he calls to someone off stage.) Bring some Barbera wine . . . Tell me, Father, is filling oneself with wine a sin? . . .

PRIEST. That, too . . .

CANT. Then call down the immigrants.

NIC. Good morning! . . .

CANT. Here is the immigrant . . . Don't leave me alone, friend . . . so I don't get cheated . . .

VOICES. (From the table of the settlers.) Long live Nicola! . . . Long live Nicola! . . . (One of them offers him a glass of wine.)

NIC. Pardon me . . . I have some business to settle . . . I'll come back immediately . . . How are you, Father? Excuse me, Cantalicio, if I'm late . . . I had to go to Testaseca's to get the money, and since they were busy, they kept me waiting . . .
CANT. That's all right. . . But get on with the handing over without any ceremony, because I'm in a hurry. . .

NIC. Good! . . . Good! . . . The matter is very easy. . . Everything that we had to talk about has already been discussed. . . (He takes some papers and money from his belt.) Let's see . . . I owe you . . . owe you . . . wait a minute; a thousand from one account, and three hundred and forty from the other . . . One thousand three hundred and forty . . .

CANT. It seems to me that you made a mistake. . .

NIC. What's the matter? . . .

CANT. (Excitedly.) Yes, sir, you've made a mistake! . . . It's one thousand three hundred and forty-eight dollars!

NIC. Excuse me . . . You are right . . . What is fair is fair. . . This number wasn't clear and anyone can make a mistake . . . Nor am I very good at writing . . .

CANT. (Aside.) But you don't get lost in numbers . . .
NIC. Very well. . . (He tediously counts the money.)

Here are a thousand dollars exactly! . . . Please count them. . .

LABORER. (Counting.) Six hundred, eight hundred, and a thousand. It's all here. . .

NIC. Good, good. And now for the rest I'm going to give you this little note. . .

CANT. What is that? . . . You're not going to give me any little notes . . . I don't want any papers . . . A deal is a deal. . . You have to give me cash!

NIC. But listen, Cantalicio . . . It happens that I have my cash at Testaseca's, and Testaseca didn't have any more cash available today. . .

CANT. Is that the way we have it all fixed up!

. . . Well, either you pay me all in cash or you keep it all. . . Now you want to put me off! . . .

NIC. But listen, Cantalicio. . . My credit is as good as a bank's. . . You can take this paper anywhere and they'll pay it. . .

CANT. A bank? . . . Who knows what tricks they may want to play on me! . . . No, sir. . . A deal is a deal . . . Bring the cash. . .
NIC. Excuse me, but I am not a swindler, and don't say that I am, because I don't like it...

CANT. The cash! ... The cash! ...

NIC. Well! ... Well! ... Damnation! ...

Here you have the cash, and if you don't like it that way ... do whatever you want to ... I'm not going to say any more. (He makes a movement to withdraw.)

CANT. Say! ... Where are you going, you confounded immigrant? ... (Pulling at his clothes.) Stop that crook ... Hand over the money! ...

NIC. Look, Cantalicio ... Don't look for a quarrel, because I don't want trouble with anyone ... You're half-drunk and ...

CANT. No such thing! ... (He tries to throw himself on Nicola, but the laborer stops him. The customers, who have been anticipating something, help, with the exception of the settlers, who stay in their chairs.)

Let him loose--I'm going to kill him ... (Nicola, very calm, leans on a table, facing the audience, fills his pipe and smokes.)

PRIEST. Come on, Cantalicio ... Calm yourself ... Don't do anything foolish ... You're wrong! ...
CANT. For Heaven's sake! ... What do you mean I'm wrong! ... Didn't you see that man insulted me after trying to cheat me? ... Didn't you see him? ...

NIC. I do not cheat anybody... I am an honorable, hard-working man...

CANT. You are honorable because everyone protects you ... everyone ... everyone ... even the priest says you're right ... I am a crook ... I don't have any money or a ranch and I was born in this country ... You are very honorable, and nevertheless you wanted to cheat me of the few cents you allowed me ...

PRIEST. Cantalicio ... That's not true ... Calm down. Rest a little and come with me. I am going to discount the I.O.U. for him. (Making him sit down.)

CANT. No, sir. He has to pay me for it ... He has to pay me for it ... He has to pay me for it ... Everyone go away ... Leave me alone ... Go take care of him ... He needs it more. Leave me alone! ...

I don't need anybody ... I don't have any friends, no house, no children, no country ... I'm an outcast ... Nobody loves me ... Leave! ... I'm going to die! ...
I'm very sad. . . Leave. . . No house. . . No children . . . No Friends. . . I'm just a poor old man . . . a miserable old man. . . (He hides his face in his hands, sobbing convulsively. The priest, by his expression, asks pity for him; meanwhile, in the background, the settlers sing again as the curtain falls slowly.)
ACT THREE

Cantalicio's Ranch

Two years later at Nicola's new farm. Occupying the right half of the scene is a building under construction, with the walls rising scarcely two feet from the ground, sufficient to support the frames which have yet to be placed. Several masons are laying bricks. Standing in the very center is an old tree, half-stripped of its branches, which extends its thickest branch toward the side of the construction. Lying on the ground are some recently-cut branches. There is a pleasant view of a green alfalfa field in the bright sunlight.

1ST FARM HAND. Well! There's no way out of it! . . . Now comes the big one, brother. . . These trees ought to be dynamited.

2ND FARM HAND. Are we really going to start cutting on this one? (Pointing at the thick branch.)

1ST FARM HAND. Well! . . . There's no way out of it!

. . .

2ND FARM HAND. This is an old one, isn't it? . . .

Look at the roots it has. . .
1ST FARM HAND. I'll bet it was planted during the Spanish colonization.

2ND FARM HAND. When? Long before then! A lot longer! It's probably from the time of the English colonization.

1ST FARM HAND. Show your ignorance! The English have never come to this country. It's only recently that they've been coming.

2ND FARM HAND. What do you know about it? Look; first the Indians came to Argentina—the Matacos; then the English, then the Spaniards, then General San Martín, General Belgrano, and all the others.

MASON. (Jokingly.) I'll declare! This is like being in school! Tell us, teacher.

2ND FARM HAND. You must be very intelligent. Like that brick you're pounding.

MASON. If you had taught me, then I would be brilliant.

2ND FARM HAND. Come! Come! Get to work! Stupid! What if your boss sees you?

MASON. He'll be easier on me than yours will if he catches you loafing. Look, just as if he had guessed that you weren't working. He's coming in the cart.
2ND FARM HAND. He sure is! ... Say, get busy! ...

(They look for a convenient place to saw better.)

1ST FARM HAND. It really hurts me to cut it. ...

2ND FARM HAND. Because of the tree ... or because of the work? ...

1ST FARM HAND. What? ... Because of both ... Let's go. (They begin to saw. Pause. The noise of the saw and the sounds of the masons' trowels are heard for a moment.)

(Nicola, Victoria, and Horacio appear wearing light summer clothes. There is considerable improvement in the dress of the first two, especially Victoria. Horacio is elegant and self-confident.)

HORA. I tell you, Papa, you are mistaken ... the greater the natural elevation of the reservoir, the less artificial elevation is needed. ...

NIC. But why does it have to be higher? ... That is what I don't understand.

HORA. The physical theory of communicating vessels...

NIC. Communicating, the dickens. ... Forget that nonsense. ... I'm no brain. ... Tell me in plain language. ...

HORA. (Laughing.) All right, all right, Papa! ... I confess my mistake. ... Let's not discuss it any more.
Now the contractor will prove that I'm right. . . Let's see how the work is going. . . You've never come before, have you, Victoria? . . .

**VICT.** No, I never have! . . .

**HORA.** You're not very curious! . . . Look; from this point up, there's going to be a beautiful summer house. . . I offer it to you. . .

**VICT.** It's all the same to me. I'm fine anywhere. . . and I don't understand much about conveniences. . .


**VICT.** I don't know! . . .

**HORA.** Poor little girl! . . . Have you considered suicide? . . .

**VICT.** (With disgust.) Oh! . . . Go away. . .

**HORA.** (Laughing.) I forgot. . . Papa! . . . Where has that stubborn man gone? . . .

**NIC.** (Reappearing.) I tell you I'm right . . . I have seen the land with my own eyes. . .

**HORA.** Well. . . Now the contractor will tell you. . . Let's go see him. . .

**NIC.** Maybe you have a lot of book learning, but I have the experience. . .
HORA. (To a mason.) Where is the contractor? . . .

MASON. He went to the creamery in the automobile, but he's not coming back. . .

HORA. Meanwhile, we should go see the foreman. . .

Don't you think so, Papa? . . .

NIC. Yes, but wait a minute. . . (To the farmhands.)

You've been working since yesterday, and you haven't been able to chop down more than those twigs? . . . It seems that you're loafing quite a bit, eh? . . .

2ND FARM HAND. This tree is tough. . . Do you think that an ombú tree can be chopped down just like that? . . .

NIC. An ax and strong arms are all that's necessary . . . And you will see how quickly it falls. . .

2ND FARM HAND. It seems like the ax won't go in. . . It bounces like it was rubber! . . .

NIC. Great Scott! . . . Why do you have that saw in your hands? . . . Well? . . . Let's see if you can finish quickly. . . Come on . . .


VICT. No. . . it's too far. . . I don't feel like walking so much. . .

HORA. What are you going to do? . . .
VICT. Nothing... I'll just go back to the carriage... 

HORA. Suit yourself... Romantic lady... (Seeing that Victoria is becoming vexed.) Ah, no! ... I don't permit anger, little girl... (He kisses her.) See you later. (Nicola and Horacio exit at the right. Victoria slowly leaves by the opposite side.)

1ST FARM HAND. Good-bye, girl... Don't you remember your old friends any more?...

2ND FARM HAND. Who sees her, eh? ... And all the times we have plowed together in the same field...

(Cantalicio enters.)

1ST FARM HAND. Now, she is a lady, eh! ... Ha! Ha! ...

2ND FARM HAND. I wish Cantalicio's son Prospero would come back so we could see if she would treat him with such scorn.

MASON. Go on with your fault-finding... That should pay for the coffee old Nicola has given you...

2ND FARM HAND. Quiet, fool!...

CANT. Who's talking about Cantalicio over there?...

2ND FARM HAND. (Joyfully.) Greetings, Cantalicio... Glad to see you... We thought you were dead...
CANT. You can see I'm not, friend. . . That's bad. . .
Say, are the immigrants around? . . .

2ND FARM HAND. They are in the low land. . . And what
wind brings you to these parts? . . . Where have you
been? . . .

CANT. Far away. . . Around Córdoba. . .

2ND FARM HAND. Doing what? . . .

CANT. Everything. What else could I do? I had to
reach old age in order to have to break my back working!
And thank goodness I'm still useful for something. . . I'll
bet you don't know what I'm doing.

2ND FARM HAND. No, sir.

CANT. I'm selling stock to the immigrants. . . Look
what luck. . . In my time I knew how to round up wild cattle
for myself. . . for my land, for this very same land. . .
now I am condemned to taking steers to the settlers. . .

2ND FARM HAND. That's the way it goes, man. . .

CANT. Only yesterday I took some sixty animals to a
rancher at Cháñarito. Afterwards, because I was so close
to the old place, I said to myself: Say, go see how that
business is coming along. . . I didn't want to go on this
road, so I wouldn't remember, understand? But homesickness
began to pull me over here, and when I realized it . . . I
was here. . .
2ND FARM HAND. Well, well! . . .

CANT. From far off I saw all the tricks that the immigrants played on me in this business. . . (Looking around.) Look. . . Look. . . There's nothing left of my house. . . It seems that they are going to build a whole town. . . Not the oven. . . nor the well. . . nor the fence. . . Inhuman! And that? I'll never forgive them for that. . . Cutting down the peach trees! . . . The ones that my dead daughter Elisa had planted . . . and every year it yielded such peaches! . . . Scoundrels! . . . the only thing, the only thing of mine that I can still see is that tree. . . But say. . . Why are they trimming it that way? . . .

2ND FARM HAND. Trimming it? . . . It's going to the ground, too. . . We are chopping it down! . . .

CANT. That can't be. . . The ño'bu? . . . Never in my cursed life. . . They have been able to cut down everything, because they were the owners. . . But the tree is not theirs. It belongs to the country, by Jove! . . .

2ND FARM HAND. I think so too. But the bosses say the poor old tree is going to be in the way of the house. . . . (Victoria appears and stops to listen.)
CANT. Why don't they build further on? . . . Fine reason! . . . Ombus are like brooks or the hills... I've never seen them cover up a river and build a house on top of it . . . nor have I seen a mountain chopped down to make a pasture. . . Murderers! . . . They don't have a soul! . . . If they had something inside, it would hurt them to destroy a tree so beautiful, so good, so gentle. . . It's easy to see, by Jove, that they haven't seen it grow and they haven't any on their own land! . . .

2ND FARM HAND. Go make them understand these reasons...

CANT. And just what are they going to understand. . . if you yourselves don't oppose this treachery? . . .

2ND FARM HAND. Oh! . . . They have ordered us. . .

CANT. It doesn't matter. . . Leave here, you miserable wretches. . . Everyone has sold out. . . There will be nothing left but immigrants--nothing! . . . I wonder why I came, damn it, to see so much sorrow! . . . (On turning around he meets Victoria; he speaks abruptly.)

Hello. . . Are you coming out to see the fine things they are doing? . . . (He tries to leave.)

VICT. Don't go away, Cantalicio. . . Listen to me. . . I have to tell you something. . . Come. . . (She withdraws
a little and for a moment she is undecided as to what to say.)

CANT. Well, go ahead and talk! . . .

VICT. Uh. . . . Do you know anything about Próspero? . . .

CANT. I don't know anything about him, and I don't need to know anything about him. . . . Is that all you wanted to talk to me about? . . .

VICT. It's just that . . . Próspero is anxious to hear from you. . . .

CANT. And how do you know that? . . .

VICT. (Confused.) Over there . . . the people say so. . . .

CANT. It cannot be true. . . . He doesn't remember me any more. . . .

VICT. Yes, he does remember. . . .

CANT. NO, no, no! . . . A lie! . . . (He tries to leave.)

VICT. (Stopping Him.) He has told me many times. . . .

CANT. Where? . . .

VICT. In Rosario. . . . During the time we spent there two months ago. . . . We saw each other very often . . . and he talked to me about his father, whom he loved very much
... whom he wanted to see so much ... and ... see, yesterday he wrote me and in his letter he asked me two or three times about you...

CANT. What is that? ... Letters? ...

VICT. (Covering her mouth.) How stupid of me! ...

I let it out! ...

CANT. (Very mollified.) So that is the way matters stand, eh?

VICT. Yes, but nobody knows it yet! ...

CANT. And how is the rascal getting along? ...

VICT. He's just fine ... he's highly regarded by Mr. Daples... Oh! I think Papa is coming...

CANT. I'm leaving... (On turning he finds himself face to face with Nicola.)

NIC. (A little surprised.) What's this? ... Is it you, Cantalicio? ... How are you? ... What are you doing in these parts? ... You've come to see your old house, eh? It's a little changed, isn't it? It's still going to be a lot better... (Cantalicio, who has remained quiet, plays with the cattle whip in his hands.) Now, when I build this other two-story house ... and put in the garden and the fruit orchard ... and the dairy down
there. . . (He shakes the ashes from his pipe and puts it in his mouth again.) It's going to be better . . . much better. . . But you can already see the change. . . Oh, and look what a nice field of alfalfa! . . . and my oldest son, the one who studied engineering in Buenos Aires, is doing it all. . . Where is Horacio? . . . Say, Horacio! . . .

HORA. What's the matter? (Greeting Cantalicio politely.) Hello, sir! . . .

NIC. Let me introduce Cantalicio, the one who used to own this land . . . My son, Horacio . . .

HORA. I'm very glad to know you, sir. . . (Extending his hand.)

CANT. (Very dryly.) Same here.

HORA. I must have known you when I was a child, but frankly, now I don't remember you.

CANT. It's quite likely . . .

HORA. Come here, Victoria . . . You must have known her, eh? . . . Do you know each other?

CANT. I've already met her.

VICT. We are old friends . . .

HORA. But what a memory I have . . . If I'm not mistaken, you have a son in Rosario.

CANT. Yes. Próspero.
HORA. I know him! ... Fine boy! ... We became friends recently when I went to contract with Mr. Daples for the threshing machine.

VICT. Tell him about Próspero, because I think it's been a long time since Cantalicio has seen him. ...

HORA. He is fine. He is Daples' right-hand man. ... He is in charge of the threshing machines. ... Just recently I suggested that he come to do our work.

CANT. Do you think he will come?

HORA. I don't know. ... He was thinking about leaving with a threshing machine headed for Arias. ... It could be ... (Pause.) It's been some time since you've been around here. ... The change has probably surprised you. ...

CANT. I've already seen it, sir, I've already seen it! ... ...

HORA. With a little sorrow, right? ...

CANT. Why? ... You could do what you pleased! ...

HORA. Come with us. ... I'll show you some things. ...

CANT. I can't ... I have a long way to go. ...

VICT. What! You mustn't go while the sun is so hot. ... You must have lunch with us at home. ...

HORA. Excellent idea! ... (Very familiarly.) Come, old friend. ... You will see how beautiful we are leaving
your land... Let's go... and don't take it to heart...
... this is for the good of everyone...

CANT. Look, young man, we have never known each
other well enough for you to be so familiar with me...
I have already told you that I have to go...

HORA. All right, sir... Excuse me... It is for
you to say... But I assure you I had no intention of
offending you...

CANT. All right... Good-bye... (He leaves al-
most running.)

HORA. (Who has followed him with his eyes.) He's
an odd one... Did you see him...

VICT. Poor man...

HORA. We haven't treated him badly, nevertheless...

2ND FARM HAND. He's going to his horse like a flash
of lightning...

VICT. Don't you feel a pang at seeing such a beloved
thing disappear...

HORA. I'm sure the son doesn't feel that way...

(Noticing that the farmhands have stopped sawing.) Oh!...

Why don't you keep on working...

2ND FARM HAND. W-ell!... It seemed to us we heard
you say... that you were really going to leave the tree
like it is...
HORA. Who gave you such an order? . . .

1ST FARM HAND. We don't know . . . but . . . we really believed it. . .

HORA. The aversion you have to work makes you see visions. . . Get to work! . . . Get to work! . . .

VICT. Listen, Horacio! . . . You were saying a little while ago that you thought I was sad. . . Do you want me to tell you the cause?

HORA. Well! Well! . . . We have secrets. Who is the favored one? . . . Your lover? . . .

VICT. I don't have a lover . . .

HORA. That's too bad, little girl . . .

VICT. I was troubled about the tree. . .


VICT. I hated to see them cut down the old tree. . .

HORA. I can't believe it! . . . A hopelessly romantic case! . . .

VICT. (Angrily.) Oh! . . .

2ND FARM HAND. That must be the contractor's automobile coming now. I see a cloud of dust on the hill. . .

HORA. Troubled because a useless thing is being destroyed. . . Is the contractor coming? . . .

VICT. Useless. . . No.
HORA. And ugly and in the way. . . Imagine a park in the English style, facing a chalet, with a monstrosity like that in the center. . . Moreover, it obstructs the view of the building. . . and it is dirty, my dear, very dirty; it covers everything with those flowers that look like worms. . . I would be able to save it out of respect for tradition and perhaps it would give some service . . . if it were in the middle of a field. . . But here, no, it's out of the question! . . .

VICT. You're right. . . Nevertheless, it is a whim of mine . . . and it would please me immensely if you would order them to leave it. . .

HORA. (Seeing Nicola.) Papa, I'll bet you don't know what Victoria is asking me to do. . . She wants us to leave the tree! . . .

NIC. That good-for-nothing thing. . . A tree that isn't even good for firewood . . . it's good only for inspiring verses by Juan Moreira. . . It should already be down. . .

HORA. (To Victoria.) You see? . . .

VICT. Wretch! . . . You're going to pay for that! . . .

2ND FARM HAND. Well. . . Are we going to cut it or aren't we? . . .
NIC. Put the saw to it and cut out the foolishness!

... Damn! ... Has Cantalicio gone yet? ... It seems he's a little more gentle now. ... He used to have a bad disposition before. ... He was quarrelsome. ... (The noise of a stopping automobile is heard.)

HORA. Don't believe it, Papa. He went away sullen...

NIC. That's too bad. ... The son wasn't bad. But he had the nerve to fall in love with Victoria. ... and I had to throw him out...

HORA. (Jovially.) Ah! ... Now I understand. ... Because of the tree, eh? ... I'll fix things up! ...

That jade! ... (The sound of the motor is louder.)

2ND FARM HAND. There's the automobile...

1ST FARM HAND. What's going on?

HORA. Now, we'll see who's right, Papa. How much will you bet, Victoria, that I'm right? ...

VICT. And what do I know about that? ...

NIC. Bet him your inheritance that I'm right and you'll see how experience wins. ... Do you think that because you've been to the University you know more than an old man who has spent his life dealing in land? ...

CONTRACTOR. (Hurried.) Please! ... Nicola! ...

Horacio! ... Come here a minute! ...
VOICES. What's going on? . . .

CONTR. I've got a man here who's hurt! . . . An old farmer! . . .

VICT. (Very alarmed.) What? . . . Who is he? . . .

CONTR. I don't know! . . . Come here a minute, gentlemen . . . (Victoria runs ahead.)

HORA. (Stopping her.) Wait a minute... You have nothing to do with this! . . .

VICT. Oh! . . . I'm going! . . . (Victoria, Horacio, Nicola, and the contractor leave.)

2ND FARM HAND. (Looking on with the rest of the workers.) Say! . . . Look! . . . It looks like Cantalicio! . . .

1ST FARM HAND. It is! . . .

MASON. He can't be hurt very bad when he's jumping around so much.

1ST FARM HAND. I wonder what has happened to him?

2ND FARM HAND. I'll bet your boss has run over him with the threshing machine. . . Those machines are worse than trains. . . (Pause.)

1ST FARM HAND. Say, look! . . . He's getting off by himself. . . (Pause.)

2ND FARM HAND. Oh! . . . And why are those immigrants trying to stop him? . . . (Pause.)
MASON. And he insisted on coming here . . . (Pause.)

1ST FARM HAND. They're taking off his poncho . . .
(Pause).

2ND FARM HAND. I'll swear! . . . He looks like he's in bad shape! . . .

1ST FARM HAND. Great Scott! . . . What's happened to him? . . .

MASON. I don't know. . . But let's get busy, boys, if we don't want to get scolded. What difference does it make to us? . . . (Exaggerated activity among the workers.)

CANT. (Still from outside.) Why didn't you leave me alone? . . . (Sound of voices.)

2ND FARM HAND. Look at him! . . . Poor man, just look at him! . . .

CANT. (Appearing without his poncho, staggering, and supported by Victoria; his right arm is blood-stained.) Aren't you satisfied with having bothered me in life? . . .

Let me die in peace . . . and where I take a notion to . . .

VICT. Why are you so obstinate? . . . We don't have anything here to treat you with. . . Come to the house! . . .

CANT. You don't have to treat me. I'm going to die!

. . . It's all over! . . . The old man won't bother you any more. . . No more! . . .
NIC. Wait, Cantalicio. . . The girl is right. . .
We don't want to let an old man die like a dog! . . .

VICT. (Angrily.) Be quiet, Papa. . . Leave him in peace! . . .

CANT. Let it go, girl. . . He can say whatever he wants to. . . He's the master! . . . This is his house!
. . . (Complaining.) I'm all in. . . Take me, my dear. . .
You're the only good one of them . . . there . . . to the tree. If they chop it down before I die, just let it fall on me. . . (Victoria leads him slowly toward the tree.)

HORA. (To the contractor.) How did it happen?

CONTR. He was going at full speed; and when he met the threshing machine, the horse shied and threw him off. . .
We picked him up unconscious. When he came to . . .

HORA. Why didn't you take him to the house, friend? . . .

CONTR. He tried to jump out of the car here, so naturally, I stopped. . .

HORA. What a pity. . . But it isn't serious, is it?

CONTR. At least, a broken bone! He hit a post. . .

CANT. (Making himself comfortable at the base of the tree.) Just leave me here, girl. . . Among these roots that seem like arms. . . It was God's will that I should die in my own ruins. . .
NIC. Confound it, Cantalicio. . . You aren't doing right by being so stubborn! . . .

CANT. (Becoming haughty.) Go away. . . Immigrant!

. . .

CURTAIN
ACT FOUR

Nicola's Remodeled Ranch

Nicola's original ranch. The ranch house has been replaced by a painted building with eaves; there are straw chairs and armchairs under the eaves. The old building is preserved as it was, but without the pigeon house. Where the original well was, there is now a windmill, and in the patio, there is a new garden with a flower bed in the center. In the background, where the watering trough was, now there are shocks of recently cut wheat. Two farmhands are working lifting forkfuls of straw. It is very early morning.

NIC. (Entering with several little bags of wheat.) Here are the samples! . . . The grain is about the same size, as I was saying. . . I don't want to cheat you. . . I never lied to anybody. . .

GRAIN DEALER. (Briefly examining the wheat.) I know them. . . The only mixed and dirty wheat comes from Rodini's place.

NIC. Don't tell me that. . . He is unprincipled. . . He's not my partner any more. . . Some of my relatives
have come here, and I'm going to give them that piece of land so they can begin working it... They are poor people, understand?

GRAIN DEALER. Fine; according to the instructions that I have, I could offer you thirty-five ...

NIC. Is that so? Do you know what you're saying? Do you think you're dealing with people who don't understand business? ... Here is yesterday's Capital from Rosario... Just read it... Look at those prices...

GRAIN DEALER. You know very well that this newspaper always quotes higher prices...

NIC. Well, anyway, it opens the eyes of us foreigners... And after all, you already know that I do business with Soberan, and if you've come to suggest that I stop dealing with him, prices must be improving... Why should you expect me to change my dealer without gaining anything? ...

GRAIN DEALER. Well, sir; give me the samples, and I'll try to get you a better price... If we can.

NIC. Suit yourself... Good-bye...

HORA. What was he saying...

NIC. Imagine such nonsense... Offering thirty-five... He must have thought that we were born yesterday...
HORA. If he tries that kind of thing, I'll soon
tell him where to get off.

NIC. Oh! . . . I settled it.

HORA. Did the threshing machine start?

NIC. The machine is already here. . . But work can-
not begin today, because the agent is missing . . . they
say that he stayed with the wagon at Baranda's ranch. . .
I'm hoping he'll come. . .

HORA. Did they hitch up the gig for me? . . .

NIC. Yes, I think so. . . But you're not going to
go because I have to tell you something. . . As you know,
the contractor is in love with Victoria. . . The girl is
grown-up now, and she should be getting married. . . Last
night the young man asked me about it . . . and I told him
I would think the matter over. . .

HORA. DO you know if Victoria feels the same way
about him?

NIC. How should I know! . . . I have noticed . . .
and it seems to me that the girl is avoiding him . . .
they're never together. . .

HORA. If it's that way, then there is nothing doing. . .
No one can decide that matter better than she can . . .
consult her yourself.
NIC. Uh! ... No! ... It embarrasses me to talk to my daughter about these things. ...

HORA. You should be ashamed! ... That's rich! ... Then I'll ask her about it today or tomorrow. ...

NIC. Why delay? ... He asked me for an answer by today, before he goes to Rosario. ... The contractor is a fine person, eh?

HORA. I'll ask her right away. ... But I warn you that these things shouldn't be done that way ... like a lease or a sale. ...

NIC. I don't say that ... but if the girl likes him ... there is no reason for so much formality. ...

HORA. Where is Victoria? ...

MAREA (Entering with a bag of food in her hand.) Victoria? ... She must be with the old man ... with that old fellow ... taking care of his injured arm. ... I really don't understand why you had to bring that thief to the house. ... Luiggin. ... Oh! ... Luiggin! ... Just to make a lot of work. ... We've been caring for him and spending money for the doctor and the pharmacist for a month and a half. ... (Impatiently.) Luiggin! ... Luiggi. ... in! ... 

LUIG. What's the matter?
MARIA. When your mother calls you, come right away, understand? . . . Grab that bag of food and take it to the farmhands in the low land. . . He could have stayed at his house . . . and not come to impose on our families. . . And that Victorina, she spends all of her time with the old man, just as if he was her own father. . . and she doesn't do what she's supposed to . . . and she lets an old woman go around carrying bags of food. . . (She puts the bag on the boy's shoulders; he goes off bent under its weight. Cantalicio, his arm amputated, appears on the left.)

HORA. Please, mama, don't talk like that. . . It seems like you don't have any feelings! . . .

MARIA. I have feelings . . . and I don't wish anybody any harm. . . But what I'm telling you is true. . . Why was it necessary for us to have in the house a sick man who is good-for-nothing but to bother us just when there is so much work with the threshing machine? . . . Let me speak. If we wanted to help the poor man, we could have sent him to the inn in town. . . I would have paid what it cost . . . and it would all be over. . . However, we have him here and it's double trouble . . . because
the girl doesn't do anything because she's taking care of him. ..

CANT. Horacio! .. (Surprised.) Do me a favor. ..
this is the last one I'll ask of you. .. Lend me a wagon
so I can get to town .. and a farmhand too, because
with this bad arm--damn it--I won't be able to drive it...

HORA. Why are you going away? .. You're not well
yet. ..

CANT. Because I don't want to be a burden to any-
body. .. I've inconvenienced you enough already. ..

NIC. (To Maria.) Go inside, if you don't want me
to slap you this minute. .. You always have to do stupid
things. .. Crazy old woman. ..

MARIA. (Leaving.) What I have said, I said it! ..
And I'm right. .. What a devil! ..

HORA. No; you mustn't take her seriously. .. She
thinks a lot of you. .. She was just talking to hear her
head rattle! ..

CANT. Don't say any more, Horacio. .. I know that
you are very fine .. almost as fine as your sister. ..
But the others have a grudge against me .. they cannot
wish me well. .. I'm going away. ..
NIC. Look, Cantalicio. . . You know that I never deceive anyone . . . never, right? . . . Good. I tell you I'm your friend. . . And I give you my hand in friendship, understand? (He extends his hand.)

CANT. Look. . . I no longer have a right hand to shake. . . They've cut it off. . . excuse me. . . (To Horacio.) Will you have the wagon brought at once? Please! . . .

NIC. (Knocking the ashes from his pipe.) All right. . . Do what you want to. . . (He leaves.)

HORA. I understand your sensitiveness, Cantalicio. . . However, you don't have the right to . . .

CANT. The right, no; obligation. . . Won't you have the wagon brought? . . . Because if you don't! . . .

HORA. Come here. . . Sit down and let's reason this out. . . I'm going to bring you an armchair. . . (Victoria enters.) You've arrived just in time to help me convince Cantalicio. . . He wants to leave! . . .

VICT. What is this? . . .

CANT. (Sadly.) Yes, my dear! . . . Like the vultures . . . they eat and they go up into the clouds . . .

VICT. That will happen only if I say so! You are mine, poor old thing. . .
HORA. (With the armchair.) Here you are... Sit down...

CANT. Thank you... As I am about to leave, I'll be frank with you... You are a pair of good kids... Victoria, you're a dear girl!... I know that you have pitied me... (Protests.) Yes, pitied a poor old man... They picked me up hurt... to treat me... But what happened to you is like what happens to children who take home a mangy dog they have found, and the result is that the parents kick it outdoors...

HORA. Oh, no!... I swear that...

CANT. I've said everything I'm going to say, and now I'm leaving... Don't think that I'm an ingrate... On the other hand, I've already announced to you that I wouldn't live among foreigners...

HORA. Are we foreigners?

CANT. No, but the others are... Let's not talk about it any more, Horacio... If you don't have me taken to town, I swear I'll walk there... My word as a gentleman... .

HORA. If that's the way it is... there's nothing more to be done... I'll go with you...

CANT. Let's go right now...
HORA. (After a pause.) I'm going to get the carriage ready... (Victoria is crying; she hides her face in her hands.)

CANT. What's the matter, my dear? ... Do you want to make me cry, too? ... I assure you! ... I'm leaving here because they've thrown me out... I was just getting fond of this place... with all of the attention I was getting.

VICT. (Without raising her head.) That's not true! Nobody is throwing you out! ... You're going because you don't like me...

CANT. But I like you very much! ... You're so good... Raise your head... Kiss me good-bye... (He gets up.)

VICT. (Throwing her arms around his neck.) Papa! ... You can't go... Don't go... Don't leave me alone! If you do, I'll die!...

CANT. Papa? ... Oh! ...

VICT. Papa! ... Yes! ... You are my other father...

CANT. You're going to make me believe it, girl...

VICT. It's true! That's why you can't go away...

CANT. Tell me the truth...

VICT. (Calm now.) Do you promise to stay? ...
CANT. No! ... Pardon me, but ... 

VICT. Sit down a minute. ... (They sit.) Tell me. ... Haven't you told me that you would be very happy if I married Prospero ... and gave you a lot of little grandchildren? ... 

CANT. I should say so! ... But that would be hard to do. ... Impossible! ... Maybe not as far as you're concerned. ... But as for your parents. ... 

VICT. Exactly; that's why I don't want you to go away. ... 

CANT. You want me to convince the foreigners, eh? Oh, no, my dear! ... That would be like trying to count the stars. You can never count them, and you'd only get callouses on your fingers from trying to. ... 

VICT. You can help me in another way. ... 

CANT. I don't know how! ... 

VICT. Look. They're not going to make me marry anybody else. ... They keep sticking this contractor in front of me, and I believe that he has even talked to Papa ... but I'll run away first. ... 

CANT. And where will you go? ... 

VICT. I'd go with you ... or some place or other...
LUIG. Horacio says that the gig is ready. . . If you're still planning to leave. . .

CANT. Right away! . . . My dear, bring me my poncho . . . and good-bye. . . (He stands up.)

VICT. No! No! No! You're going to make me cry again. . . Please be still. . . If you knew. . . I need you so much! . . .

CANT. Leave me alone. . . It's better for me to go. . .

VICT. (To Luiggin.) Tell him that he's not going away now. . . Run! . . . (Luiggin leaves) I must tell you something! . . . Don't move! . . .

CANT. No more stories; bring me my poncho. . .

VICT. This is very serious. . . Papa! . . .

CANT. (Impatiently.) All right. Tell me at once and let's have it over! . . .

VICT. It's that. . . Ha, ha! . . . It makes me laugh and it makes me ashamed. . . (Looking around.) If you want me to . . . I'll whisper it in your ear. . .

CANT. Don't say anything if it's that bad. . .

VICT. (After a minute's hesitation, she whispers to him.)

CANT. (Getting up.) You? . . .
VICT. (Who has become very embarrassed, nods affirmatively.)

CANT. For goodness sake! . . .

VICT. It was in Rosario. . . Mama was in the hotel sick. . . Próspero came to see me and. . . That's why I don't want you to go away! . . . This has to become known; tomorrow they'll find out, and if I don't run away, my parents are capable of killing me. . .

CANT. Poor little girl! . . . And that rascal was capable of . . .

VICT. Why rascal? . . . Poor fellow! . . .

CANT. My dear daughter! . . . Give me a hug! That's the way! . . . Now I understand why you talked about grandchildren so much while I was sick! . . . Dear daughter! . . . (He embraces her.)

PROS. (Who has entered a moment before.) Bravo! I like that! . . . Bravo! Bravo!

CANT. Próspero . . . (They fall in each other's arms.) Excuse me, son, for not being able to embrace you right. . . This is the first time I've really missed my arm. . .

PROS. Oh! . . . What happened? . . .
CANT. Don't bother about me, son! . . . You'll find out. . . Go ahead and greet Victoria. . .

PROS. Pardon me, Victoria. . . (They shake hands.)

How are you? . . .

CANT. Embrace! . . . You want to and you're not crippled like me! (They embrace.)


NIC. What's the matter with you . . . all of this squealing like a little colt? . . .
MARIÁ. I came into the patio and I found this shameless hussy in this man's arms...

NIC. What?... Victorina?...

MARIÁ. Just like last time!...

NIC. What's the meaning of this?... Great Scott!...

PROS. It means that... although this isn't the time or the place, your wife's finding us like this obliges me to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage.

NIC. Again?... What kind of idea have you got in your head?...

CANT. (Aside.) They cannot refuse her to him...

MARIÁ. That's the last straw!... With the lover who has put in an appearance now... a contractor... to give her to this hick...

NIC. Be quiet and don't yell... First, young man, you are going to tell me why you've come to this house.

PROS. I'm the agent for the threshing machine, sir...

MARIÁ. That's a lie...

NIC. I've told you to keep quiet... (To Prospero.) All right; and why aren't you over there running the machine, eh?...

HORÁ. What's going on here?... Hello, friend...

How are you?... You decided to come... Here is your father... We have kept him...
NIC. Ah! It's true that you are friends! . . . But do you know what he was doing with the girl? . . .

MARIA. He kissed her! . . . He kissed her! . . .

HORA. That is serious. . . And what was she doing? . . .

MARIA. The hussy was doing the same thing. . . I caught them in the act! . . .

HORA. Great Scott. . . (To Victoria.) Come here, you sly one. . . Have you been having an affair with him? . . . Is he your lover? . . .

VICT. (Confused.) Yes. . .

HORA. Then, Papa . . . there is nothing to be said. . .

NIC. Eh! . . . If you think the man is worthwhile, and she likes him, it doesn't matter to me, provided he's a good worker. . .

PROS. Thanks, Horacio. . .

HORA. He's yours, Victoria. . . I suppose you will work the threshing machine for free, Prospero . . . and you, old man . . . are you reconciled with the foreigners? . . .

CANT. With the foreigners . . . never in my cursed life! . . . But I am with the foreign woman, and thankful to her! . . .

HORA. Look what a fine couple they make . . . daughter of full-blooded foreigners. . . So of full-blooded
natives. From this union will come the strong race of the future... 

PROS. It's going to be developed... Another embrace, Dad...

CANT. (Aside.) What do you mean it's going to be! ... It already is, dunce! ...

PROS. Yes? ... (He runs to her.) My love! ... (He kisses her on the forehead. Movement of stupefaction. At this moment a blast of a whistle sounds.) The threshing machine is starting...

NIC. (Drawing Prospero aside.) All right, young man... Let's get to work! Let's get to work! ...

CURTAIN
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