

MILLBURN HIGH SCHOOL  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



MACHADO DE ASSIS

# *The Psychiatrist*

AND OTHER STORIES

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## *The Psychiatrist*

### I. How Itaguai Acquired a Madhouse

The chronicles of Itaguai relate that in remote times a certain physician of noble birth, Simão Bacamarte, lived there and that he was one of the greatest doctors in all Brazil, Portugal, and the Spains. He had studied for many years in both Padua and Coimbra. When, at the age of thirty-four, he announced his decision to return to Brazil and his home town of Itaguai, the King of Portugal tried to dissuade him; he offered Bacamarte his choice between the Presidency of Coimbra University and the office of Chief Expediter of Government Affairs. The doctor politely declined.

“Science,” he told His Majesty, “is my only office; Itaguai, my universe.”

He took up residence there and dedicated himself to the theory and practice of medicine. He alternated therapy with study and research; he demonstrated theorems with poultices.

In his fortieth year Bacamarte married the widow of a circuit judge. Her name was Dona Evarista da Costa e Mascarenhas, and she was neither beautiful nor charming. One of his uncles, an outspoken man, asked him why he had not selected a more attractive woman. The doctor replied that Dona Evarista enjoyed perfect digestion, excellent eyesight, and normal blood pressure; she had had no serious illnesses and her urinalysis was negative. It was likely she would give him healthy, robust children. If, in addition to her physiological accomplishments, Dona Evarista possessed a face composed of features neither individually pretty nor mutually compatible, he thanked God for it, for he would not be tempted to sacrifice his scientific pursuits to the contemplation of his wife’s attractions.

But Dona Evarista failed to satisfy her husband's expectations. She produced no robust children and, for that matter, no puny ones either. The scientific temperament is by nature patient; Bacamarte waited three, four, five years. At the end of this period he began an exhaustive study of sterility. He reread the works of all the authorities (including the Arabian), sent inquiries to the Italian and German universities, and finally recommended a special diet. But Dona Evarista, nourished almost exclusively on succulent Itaguaí pork, paid no heed; and to this lack of wifely submissiveness—understandable but regrettable—we owe the total extinction of the Bacamartian dynasty.

The pursuit of science is sometimes itself therapeutic. Dr. Bacamarte cured himself of his disappointment by plunging even deeper into his work. It was at this time that one of the byways of medicine attracted his attention: psychopathology. The entire colony and, for that matter, the kingdom itself could not boast one authority on the subject. It was a field, indeed, in which little responsible work had been done anywhere in the world. Simão Bacamarte saw an opportunity for Lusitanian and, more specifically, Brazilian science to cover itself with "imperishable laurels"—an expression he himself used, but only in a moment of ecstasy and within the confines of his home; to the outside world he was always modest and restrained, as befits a man of learning.

"The health of the soul!" he exclaimed. "The loftiest possible goal for a doctor."

"For a great doctor like yourself, yes." This emendation came from Crispim Soares, the town druggist and one of Bacamarte's most intimate friends.

The chroniclers chide the Itaguaí Town Council for its neglect of the mentally ill. Violent madmen were locked up at home; peaceable lunatics were simply left at large; and none, violent or peaceable, received care of any sort. Simão Bacamarte proposed to change all this. He decided to build an asylum and he asked the Council for authority to receive and treat all the mentally ill of Itaguaí and the surrounding area. He would be paid by the patient's family or, if the family was very poor, by the Council. The proposal aroused excitement and curiosity throughout the town. There was considerable opposition, for it is always difficult to uproot the established way of doing things,

however absurd or evil it may be. The idea of having madmen live together in the same house seemed itself to be a symptom of madness, as many intimated even to the doctor's wife.

"Look, Dona Evarista," said Father Lopes, the local vicar, "see if you can't get your husband to take a little holiday. In Rio de Janeiro, maybe. All this intensive study, a man can take just so much of it and then his mind . . ."

Dona Evarista was terrified. She went to her husband and said that she had a consuming desire to take a trip with him to Rio de Janeiro. There, she said, she would eat whatever he thought necessary for the attainment of a certain objective. But the astute doctor immediately perceived what was on his wife's mind and replied that she need have no fear. He then went to the town hall, where the Council was debating his proposal, which he supported with such eloquence that it was approved without amendment on the first ballot. The Council also adopted a tax designed to pay for the lodging, sustenance, and treatment of the indigent mad. This involved a bit of a problem, for everything in Itaguaí was already being taxed. After considerable study the Council authorized the use of two plumes on the horses drawing a funeral coach. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this privilege would pay a tax of a stated amount for each hour from the time of death to the termination of the rites at the grave. The town clerk was asked to determine the probable revenue from the new tax, but he got lost in arithmetical calculations, and one of the Councilmen, who was opposed to the doctor's undertaking, suggested that the clerk be relieved of a useless task.

"The calculations are unnecessary," he said, "because Dr. Bacamarte's project will never be executed. Who ever heard of putting a lot of crazy people together in one house?"

But the worthy Councilman was wrong. Bacamarte built his madhouse on New Street, the finest thoroughfare in Itaguaí. The building had a courtyard in the center and two hundred cubicles, each with one window. The doctor, an ardent student of Arabian lore, found a passage in the Koran in which Mohammed declared that the insane were holy, for Allah had deprived them of their judgment in order to keep them from sinning. Bacamarte found the idea at once beautiful and profound, and he had the passage engraved on the façade of the house. But he feared that this

might offend the Vicar and, through him, the Bishop. Accordingly, he attributed the quotation to Benedict VIII.

The asylum was called the Green House, for its windows were the first of that color ever seen in Itaguaí. The formal opening was celebrated magnificently. People came from the entire region, some even from Rio de Janeiro, to witness the ceremonies, which lasted seven days. Some patients had already been admitted, and their relatives took advantage of this opportunity to observe the paternal care and Christian charity with which they were treated. Dona Evarista, delighted by her husband's glory, covered herself with silks, jewels, and flowers. She was a real queen during those memorable days. Everyone came to visit her two or three times. People not only paid court to her but praised her, for—and this fact does great honor to the society of the time—they thought of Dona Evarista in terms of the lofty spirit and prestige of her husband; they envied her, to be sure, but with the noble and blessed envy of admiration.

## II. A Torrent of Madmen

Three days later, talking in an expansive mood with the druggist Crispim Soares, the psychiatrist revealed his inmost thoughts.

"Charity, Soares, definitely enters into my method. It is the seasoning in the recipe, for thus I interpret the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: 'Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing.' But the main thing in my work at the Green House is to study insanity in depth, to learn its various gradations, to classify the various cases, and finally to discover the cause of the phenomenon and its remedy. This is my heart's desire. I believe that in this way I can render a valuable service to humanity."

"A great service," said Crispim Soares.

"Without this asylum," continued the psychiatrist, "I might conceivably accomplish a little. But it provides far greater scope and opportunity for my studies than I would otherwise have."

"Far greater," agreed the druggist.

And he was right. From all the towns and villages in the vicinity came the violent, the depressed, the monomaniacal—the mentally ill of every type and variety. At the end of four months

the Green House was a little community in itself. A gallery with thirty-seven more cubicles had to be added. Father Lopes confessed that he had not imagined there were so many madmen in the world nor that such strange cases of madness existed. One of the patients, a coarse, ignorant young man, gave a speech every day after lunch. It was an academic discourse, with metaphors, antitheses, and apostrophes, ornamented with Greek words and quotations from Cicero, Apuleius, and Tertullian. The Vicar could hardly believe his ears. What, a fellow he had seen only three months ago hanging around street corners!

"Quite so," replied the psychiatrist. "But Your Reverence has observed for himself. This happens every day."

"The only explanation I can think of," said the priest, "is the confusion of languages on the Tower of Babel. They were so completely mixed together that now, probably, when a man loses his reason, he easily slips from one into another."

"That may well be the divine explanation," agreed the psychiatrist after a moment's reflection, "but I'm looking for a purely scientific, human explanation—and I believe there is one."

"Maybe so, but I really can't imagine what it could be."

Several of the patients had been driven mad by love. One of these spent all his time wandering through the building and courtyard in search of his wife, whom he had killed in a fit of jealousy that marked the beginning of his insanity. Another thought he was the morning star. He had repeatedly proposed marriage to a certain young lady, and she had continually put him off. He knew why: she thought him dreadfully dull and was waiting to see if she could catch a more interesting husband. So he became a brilliant star, standing with feet and arms outspread like rays. He would remain in this position for hours, waiting to be supplanted by the rising sun.

There were some noteworthy cases of megalomania. One patient, the son of a cheap tailor, invented a genealogy in which he traced his ancestry back to members of royalty and, through them, ultimately to Jehovah. He would recite the entire list of his male progenitors, with a "begat" to link each father and son. Then he would slap his forehead, snap his fingers, and say it all over again. Another patient had a somewhat similar idea but developed it with more rigorous logic. Beginning with the proposition that he was a child of God, which even the Vicar would

not have denied, he reasoned that, as the species of the child is the same as that of the parent, he himself must be a god. This conclusion, derived from two irrefutable premises—one Biblical, the other scientific—placed him far above the lunatics who identified themselves with Caesar, Alexander, or other mere mortals.

More remarkable even than the manias and delusions of the madmen was the patience of the psychiatrist. He began by engaging two administrative assistants—an idea that he accepted from Crispim Soares along with the druggist's two nephews. He gave these young men the task of enforcing the rules and regulations that the Town Council had approved for the asylum. They also kept the records and were in charge of the distribution of food and clothing. Thus, the doctor was free to devote all his time to psychiatry.

"The Green House," he told the Vicar, "now has its temporal government and its spiritual government." \*

Father Lopes laughed. "What a delightful novelty," he said, "to find a society in which the spiritual dominates."

Relieved of administrative burdens, Dr. Bacamarte began an exhaustive study of each patient: his personal and family history, his habits, his likes and dislikes, his hobbies, his attitudes toward others, and so on. He also spent long hours studying, inventing, and experimenting with psychotherapeutic methods. He slept little and ate little; and while he ate he was still working, for at the dinner table he would read an old text or ponder a difficult problem. Often he sat through an entire dinner without saying a word to Dona Evarista.

### III. God Knows What He Is Doing

By the end of two months the psychiatrist's wife was the most wretched of women. She did not reproach her husband but suffered in silence. She declined into a state of deep melancholy, became thin and yellowish, ate little, and sighed continually. One day, at dinner, he asked what was wrong with her. She sadly replied that it was nothing. Then she ventured for the first time

\* A play on words, for *espiritual* means both "spiritual" and "pertaining to the mind."

to complain a little, saying she considered herself as much a widow now as before she married him.

"Who would ever have thought that a bunch of lunatics . . ."

She did not complete the sentence. Or, rather, she completed it by raising her eyes to the ceiling. Dona Evarista's eyes were her most attractive feature—large, black, and bathed in a vaporous light like the dawn. She had used them in much the same way when trying to get Simão Bacamarte to propose. Now she was brandishing her weapon again, this time for the apparent purpose of cutting science's throat. But the psychiatrist was not perturbed. His eyes remained steady, calm, enduring. No wrinkle disturbed his brow, as serene as the waters of Botafogo Bay. Perhaps a slight smile played on his lips as he said:

"You may go to Rio de Janeiro."

Dona Evarista felt as if the floor had vanished and she were floating on air. She had never been to Rio, which, although hardly a shadow of what it is today, was, by comparison with Itaguai, a great and fascinating metropolis. Ever since childhood she had dreamed of going there. She longed for Rio as a Hebrew in the captivity must have longed for Jerusalem, but with her husband settled so definitively in Itaguai she had lost hope. And now, of a sudden, he was permitting her to realize her dream. Dona Evarista could not hide her elation. Simão Bacamarte took her by the hand and smiled in a manner at once conjugal and philosophical.

"How strange is the therapy of the soul!" he thought. "This lady is wasting away because she thinks I do not love her. I give her Rio de Janeiro and she is well again." And he made a note of the phenomenon.

A sudden misgiving pierced Dona Evarista's heart. She concealed her anxiety, however, and merely told her husband that, if he did not go, neither would she, for of course she could not travel alone.

"Your aunt will go with you," replied the psychiatrist.

It should be noted that this expedient had occurred to Dona Evarista. She had not suggested it, for it would impose great expense on her husband. Besides, it was better for the suggestion to come from him.

"Oh, but the money it will cost!" she sighed.

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "Have you any idea of our income?"

He brought her the books of account. Dona Evarista, although impressed by the quantity of the figures, was not quite sure what they signified, so her husband took her to the chest where the money was kept.

Good heavens! There were mountains of gold, thousands upon thousands of cruzados and doubloons. A fortune! While she was drinking it in with her black eyes, the psychiatrist placed his mouth close to her and whispered mischievously:

"Who would ever have thought that a bunch of lunatics . . ."

Dona Evarista understood, smiled, and replied with infinite resignation:

"God knows what he is doing."

Three months later she left for Rio in the company of her aunt, the druggist's wife, one of the druggist's cousins, a priest whom Bacamarte had known in Lisbon and who happened to be in Itaguai, four maidservants, and five or six male attendants. A small crowd had come to see them off. The farewells were sad for everyone but the psychiatrist, for he was troubled by nothing outside the realm of science. Even Dona Evarista's tears, sincere and abundant as they were, did not affect him. If anything concerned him on that occasion, if he cast a restless and police-like eye over the crowd, it was only because he suspected the presence of one or two candidates for commitment to the Green House.

After the departure the druggist and the psychiatrist mounted their horses and rode homeward. Crispim Soares stared at the road, between the ears of his roan. Simão Bacamarte swept the horizon with his eyes, surveyed the distant mountains, and let his horse find the way home. Perfect symbols of the common man and of the genius! One fixes his gaze upon the present with all its tears and privations; the other looks beyond to the glorious dawns of a future that he himself will shape.

#### IV. A New Theory

As his horse jogged along, a new and daring hypothesis occurred to Simão Bacamarte. It was so daring, indeed, that, if substantiated, it would revolutionize the bases of psychopathology. During the next few days he mulled it over. Then, in his spare time, he began to go from house to house, talking with the towns-

people about a thousand and one things and punctuating the conversations with a penetrating look that terrified even the bravest.

One morning, after this had been going on for about three weeks, Crispim Soares received a message that the psychiatrist wished to see him.

"He says it's important," added the messenger.

The druggist turned pale. Something must have happened to his wife! The chroniclers of Itaguai, it should be noted, dwell upon Crispim's love for his Cesaria and point out that they had never been separated in their thirty years of marriage. Only against this background can one explain the monologue, often overheard by the servants, with which the druggist reviled himself: "You miss your wife, do you? You're going crazy without her? It serves you right! Always truckling to Dr. Bacamarte! Who told you to let Cesaria go traveling? Dr. Bacamarte, that's who. Anything he says, you say amen. So now see what you get for it, you vile, miserable, groveling little lackey! Lickspittle! Flunkyl!" And he added many other ugly names that a man ought not call his enemies, much less himself. The effect of the message on him, in this state of mind, can be readily imagined. He dropped the drugs he had been mixing and fairly flew to the Green House. Simão Bacamarte greeted him joyfully, but he wore his joy as a wise man should—buttoned up to the neck with circumspection.

"I am very happy," he said.

"Some news of our wives?" asked the druggist in a tremulous voice.

The psychiatrist made a magnificent gesture and replied:

"It is something much more important—a scientific experiment. I say 'experiment,' for I do not yet venture to affirm the correctness of my theory. Indeed, this is the very nature of science, Soares: unending inquiry. But, although only an experiment as yet, it may change the face of the earth. Till now, madness has been thought a small island in an ocean of sanity. I am beginning to suspect that it is not an island at all but a continent."

He fell silent for a while, enjoying the druggist's amazement. Then he explained his theory at length. The number of persons suffering from insanity, he believed, was far greater than commonly supposed; and he developed this idea with an abundance of reasons, texts, and examples. He found many of these examples in Itaguai, but he recognized the fallacy of confining his data

to one time and place and he therefore resorted to history. He pointed in particular to certain historical celebrities: Socrates, who thought he had a personal demon; Pascal, who sewed a report of an hallucination into the lining of his coat; Mohammed, Caracalla, Domitian, Caligula, and others. The druggist's surprise at Bacamarte's mingling of the vicious and the merely ridiculous moved the psychiatrist to explain that these apparently inconsistent attributes were really different aspects of the same thing.

"The grotesque, my friend, is simply ferocity in disguise."

"Clever, very clever!" exclaimed Crispim Soares.

As for the basic idea of enlarging the realm of insanity, the druggist found it a little far-fetched; but modesty, his chief virtue, kept him from stating his opinion. Instead, he expressed a noble enthusiasm. He declared the idea sublime and added that it was "something for the noisemaker." This expression requires explanation. Like the other towns, villages, and settlements in the colony at that time, Itaguaí had no newspaper. It used two media for the publication of news: hand-written posters nailed to the doors of the town hall and of the main church, and the noisemaker.

This is how the latter medium worked: a man was hired for one or more days to go through the streets rattling a noisemaker. A crowd would gather and the man would announce whatever he had been paid to announce: a cure for malaria, a gift to the Church, some farm land for sale, and the like. He might even be engaged to read a sonnet to the people. The system continually disturbed the peace of the community, but it survived a long time because of its almost miraculous effectiveness. Incredible as it may seem, the noisemaker actually enabled merchants to sell inferior goods at superior prices and third-rate authors to pass as geniuses. Yes, indeed, not all the institutions of the old regime deserve our century's contempt.

"No, I won't announce my theory to the public," replied the psychiatrist. "I'll do something better: I'll act on it."

The druggist agreed that it might be best to begin that way. "There'll be plenty of time for the noisemaker afterwards," he concluded.

But Simão Bacamarte was not listening. He seemed lost in meditation. When he finally spoke, it was with great deliberation.

"Think of humanity," he said, "as a great oyster shell. Our first task, Soares, is to extract the pearl—that is, reason. In other words, we must determine the nature and boundaries of reason. Madness is simply all that lies beyond those limits. But what is reason if not the equilibrium of the mental faculties? An individual, therefore, who lacks this equilibrium in any particular is, to that extent, insane."

Father Lopes, to whom he also confided his theory, replied that he was not quite sure he understood it but that it sounded a little dangerous and, in any case, would involve more work than one doctor could possibly handle.

"Under the present definition of insanity, which has always been accepted," he added, "the fence around the area is perfectly clear and satisfactory. Why not stay within it?"

The vague suggestion of a smile played on the fine and discreet lips of the psychiatrist, a smile in which disdain blended with pity. But he said nothing. Science merely extended its hand to theology—with such assurance that theology was undecided whether to believe in itself or in science. Itaguaí and the entire world were on the brink of a revolution.

## V. The Terror

Four days later the population of Itaguaí was dismayed to hear that a certain Mr. Costa had been committed to the Green House.

"Impossible!"

"What do you mean, impossible! They took him away this morning."

Costa was one of the most highly esteemed citizens of Itaguaí. He had inherited 400,000 cruzados in the good coin of King João V. As his uncle said in the will, the interest on this capital would have been enough to support him "till the end of the world." But as soon as he received the inheritance he began to make loans to people without interest: a thousand cruzados to one, two thousand to another, three hundred to another, eight hundred to another, until, at the end of five years, there was nothing left. If poverty had come to him all at once, the shock to the good people of Itaguaí would have been enormous. But it came gradually. He went from opulence to wealth, from wealth to

comfort, from comfort to indigence, and from indigence to poverty. People who, five years earlier, had always doffed their hats and bowed deeply to him as soon as they saw him a block away, now clapped him on the shoulder, flicked him on the nose, and made coarse remarks. But Costa remained affable, smiling, sublimely resigned. He was untroubled even by the fact that the least courteous were the very ones who owed him money; on the contrary, he seemed to greet them with especial pleasure.

Once, when one of these eternal debtors jeered at him and Costa merely smiled, someone said to him: "You're nice to this fellow because you still hope you can get him to pay what he owes you." Costa did not hesitate an instant. He went to the debtor and forgave the debt. "Sure," said the man who had made the unkind remark, "Costa canceled the debt because he knew he couldn't collect it anyway." Costa was no fool; he had anticipated this reaction. Inventive and jealous of his honor, he found a way two hours later to prove the slur unmerited: he took a few coins and loaned them to the same debtor.

"Now I hope . . .," he thought.

This act of Costa's convinced the credulous and incredulous alike. Thereafter no one doubted the nobility of spirit of that worthy citizen. All the needy, no matter how timid, came in their patched cloaks and knocked on his door. The words of the man who had impugned his motive continued, however, to gnaw like worms at his soul. But this also ended, for three months later the man asked him for one hundred and twenty cruzados, promising to repay it in two days. This was all that remained of the inheritance, but Costa made the loan immediately, without hesitation or interest. It was a means of noble redress for the stain on his honor. In time the debt might have been paid; unfortunately, Costa could not wait, for five months later he was committed to the Green House.

The consternation in Itaguai, when the matter became known, can readily be imagined. No one spoke of anything else. Some said that Costa had gone mad during lunch, others said it had happened early in the morning. They told of the mental attacks he had suffered, described by some as violent and frightening, by others as mild and even amusing. Many people hurried to the Green House. There they found poor Costa calm if somewhat surprised, speaking with great lucidity and asking why he had

been brought there. Some went and talked with the psychiatrist. Bacamarte approved of their esteem and compassion for the patient, but he explained that science was science and that he could not permit a madman to remain at large. The last person to intercede (for, after what I am about to relate, no one dared go to see the dreadful psychiatrist) was a lady cousin of the patient. The doctor told her that Costa must certainly be insane, for otherwise he would not have thrown away all the money that . . .

"No! Now there you are wrong!" interrupted the good woman energetically. "He was not to blame for what he did."

"No?"

"No, Doctor. I'll tell you exactly what happened. My uncle was not ordinarily a bad man, but when he became angry he was so fierce that he would not even take off his hat to a religious procession. Well, one day, a short time before he died, he discovered that a slave had stolen an ox from him. His face became as red as a pepper; he shook from head to foot; he foamed at the mouth. Then an ugly, shaggy-haired man came up to him and asked for a drink of water. My uncle (may God show him the light!) told the man to go drink in the river—or in hell, for all he cared. The man glared at him, raised his hand threateningly, and uttered this curse: 'Your money will not last more than seven years and a day, as surely as this is the star of David!' And he showed a star of David tattooed on his arm. That was the cause of it all, Doctor—the hex put on the money by that evil man."

Bacamarte's eyes pierced the poor woman like daggers. When she had finished, he extended his hand as courteously as if she had been the wife of the Viceroy and invited her to go and talk with her cousin. The miserable woman believed him. He took her to the Green House and locked her up in the ward for those suffering from delusions or hallucinations.

When this duplicity on the part of the illustrious Bacamarte became known, the townspeople were terrified. No one could believe that, for no reason at all, the psychiatrist would lock up a perfectly sane woman whose only offense had been to intercede on behalf of an unfortunate relative. The case was gossiped about on street corners and in barber shops. Within a short time it developed into a full-scale novel, with amorous overtures by the psychiatrist to Costa's cousin, Costa's indignation, the cousin's scorn, and finally the psychiatrist's vengeance on them both. It

was all very obvious. But did not the doctor's austerity and his life of devotion to science give the lie to such a story? Not at all! This was merely a cloak by which he concealed his treachery. And one of the more credulous of the townspeople even whispered that he knew certain other things—he would not say what, for he lacked complete proof—but he knew they were true, he could almost swear to them.

"You who are his intimate friend," they asked the druggist, "can't you tell us what's going on, what happened, what reason . . . ?"

Crispim Soares was delighted. This questioning by his puzzled friends, and by the uneasy and curious in general, amounted to public recognition of his importance. There was no doubt about it, the entire population knew that he, Crispim the druggist, was the psychiatrist's confidant, the great man's collaborator. That is why they all came running to the pharmacy. All this could be read in the druggist's jocund expression and discreet smile—and in his silence, for he made no reply. One, two, perhaps three dry monosyllables at the most, cloaked in a loyal, constant half-smile and full of scientific mysteries which he could reveal to no human being without danger and dishonor.

"There's something very strange going on," thought the townspeople.

But one of them merely shrugged his shoulders and went on his way. He had more important interests. He had just built a magnificent house, with a garden that was a masterpiece of art and taste. His furniture, imported from Hungary and Holland, was visible from the street, for the windows were always open. This man, who had become rich in the manufacture of pack-saddles, had always dreamed of owning a sumptuous house, an elaborate garden, and rare furniture. Now he had acquired all these things and, in semi-retirement, was devoting most of his time to the enjoyment of them. His house was undoubtedly the finest in Itaguaí, more grandiose than the Green House, nobler than the town hall. There was wailing and gnashing of teeth among Itaguaí's social elite whenever they heard it praised or even mentioned—indeed, when they even thought about it. Owned by a mere manufacturer of packsaddles, good God!

"There he is, staring at his own house," the passers-by would say. For it was his custom to station himself every morning in

the middle of his garden and gaze lovingly at the house. He would keep this up for a good hour, until called in to lunch.

Although his neighbors always greeted him respectfully enough, they would laugh behind his back. One of them observed that Mateus could make a lot more money manufacturing pack-saddles to put on himself—a somewhat unintelligible remark, which nevertheless sent the listeners into ecstasies of laughter.

Every afternoon, when the families went out for their after-dinner walks (people dined early in those days), Mateus would station himself at the center window, elegantly clothed in white against a dark background. He would remain there in a majestic pose for three or four hours, until it was dark. One may reasonably infer an intention on Mateus's part to be admired and envied, although he confessed no such purpose to anyone, not even to Father Lopes. His good friend the druggist nevertheless drew the inference and communicated it to Bacamarte. The psychiatrist suggested that, as the saddler's house was of stone, he might have been suffering from petrophilia, an illness that the doctor had discovered and had been studying for some time. This continual gazing at the house . . .

"No, Doctor," interrupted Crispim Soares vigorously.

"No?"

"Pardon me, but perhaps you don't know . . ." And he told the psychiatrist what the saddler did every afternoon.

Simão Bacamarte's eyes lighted up with scientific voluptuousness. He questioned Crispim at some length, and the answers he received were apparently satisfactory, even pleasant, to him. But there was no suggestion of a sinister intent in the psychiatrist's face or manner—quite the contrary—as he asked the druggist's arm for a little stroll in the afternoon sun. It was the first time he had bestowed this honor on his confidant. Crispim, stunned and trembling, accepted the invitation. Just then, two or three people came to see the doctor. Crispim silently consigned them to all the devils. They were delaying the walk; Bacamarte might even take it into his head to invite one of them in Crispim's stead. What impatience! What anxiety! Finally the visitors left and the two men set out on their walk. The psychiatrist chose the direction of Mateus's house. He strolled by the window five or six times, slowly, stopping now and then and observing the saddler's physical attitude and facial expression. Poor Mateus

noticed only that he was an object of the curiosity or admiration of the most important figure in Itaguaí. He intensified the nobility of his expression, the stateliness of his pose. . . . Alas! he was merely helping to condemn himself. The next day he was committed.

"The Green House is a private prison," said an unsuccessful doctor.

Never had an opinion caught on and spread so rapidly. "A private prison"—the words were repeated from one end of Itaguaí to the other. Fearfully, to be sure, for during the week following the Mateus episode twenty-odd persons, including two or three of the town's prominent citizens, had been committed to the Green House. The psychiatrist said that only the mentally ill were admitted, but few believed him. Then came the popular explanations of the matter: revenge, greed, a punishment from God, a monomania afflicting the doctor himself, a secret plan on the part of Rio de Janeiro to destroy the budding prosperity of Itaguaí and ultimately to impoverish this rival municipality, and a thousand other products of the public imagination.

At this time the party of travelers returned from their visit of several weeks to Rio de Janeiro. The psychiatrist, the druggist, Father Lopes, the Councilmen, and several other officials went to greet them. The moment when Dona Evarista laid eyes again on her husband is regarded by the chroniclers of the time as one of the most sublime instants in the moral history of man, because of the contrast between these two extreme (although both commendable) natures. Dona Evarista uttered a cry, stammered a word or two, and threw herself at her husband in a way that suggested at once the fierceness of a wildcat and the gentle affection of a dove. Not so the noble Bacamarte. With diagnostic objectivity, without disturbing for a moment his scientific austerity, he extended his arms to the lady, who fell into them and fainted. The incident was brief; two minutes later Dona Evarista's friends were greeting her and the homeward procession began.

The psychiatrist's wife was Itaguaí's great hope. Everyone counted on her to alleviate the scourge. Hence the public acclamation, the crowds in the streets, the pennants, and the flowers in the windows. The eminent Bacamarte, having entrusted her to the arm of Father Lopes, walked contemplatively with measured step. Dona Evarista, on the contrary, turned her head ani-

matedly from side to side, observing with curiosity the unexpectedly warm reception. The priest asked about Rio de Janeiro, which he had not seen since the previous viceroyalty, and Dona Evarista replied that it was the most beautiful sight there could possibly be in the entire world. The Public Gardens, now completed, were a paradise in which she had often strolled—and the Street of Beautiful Nights, the Fountain of Ducks . . . Ah! the Fountain of Ducks. There really were ducks there, made of metal and spouting water through their mouths. A gorgeous thing. The priest said that Rio de Janeiro had been lovely even in his time there and must be much lovelier now. Small wonder, for it was so much larger than Itaguaí and was, moreover, the capital. . . . But one could not call Itaguaí ugly; it had some beautiful buildings, such as Mateus's mansion, the Green House . . .

"And apropos the Green House," said Father Lopes, gliding skillfully into the subject, "you will find it full of patients."

"Really?"

"Yes. Mateus is there. . . ."

"The saddler?"

"Costa is there too. So is Costa's cousin, and So-and-so, and What's-his-name, and . . ."

"All insane?"

"Apparently," replied the priest.

"But how? Why?"

Father Lopes drew down the corners of his mouth as if to say that he did not know or did not wish to tell what he knew—a vague reply, which could not be repeated to anyone. Dona Evarista found it strange indeed that all those people should have gone mad. It might easily happen to one or another—but to *all* of them? Yet she could hardly doubt the fact. Her husband was a learned man, a scientist; he would not commit anyone to the Green House without clear proof of insanity.

The priest punctuated her observations with an intermittent "undoubtedly . . . undoubtedly . . ."

A few hours later about fifty guests were seated at Simão Bacamarte's table for the home-coming dinner. Dona Evarista was the obligatory subject of toasts, speeches, and verses, all of them highly metaphorical. She was the wife of the new Hippocrates, the muse of science, an angel, the dawn, charity, consolation, life itself. Her eyes were two stars, according to Crispim

Soares, and two sons, by a Councilman's less modest figure. The psychiatrist found all this a bit tiresome but showed no signs of impatience. He merely leaned toward his wife and told her that such flights of fancy, although permissible in rhetoric, were unsubstantiated in fact. Dona Evarista tried to accept this opinion; but, even if she discounted three fourths of the flattery, there was enough left to inflate her considerably. One of the orators, for example—Martim Brito, twenty-five, a pretentious fop, much addicted to women—declaimed that the birth of Dona Evarista had come about in this manner: "After God gave the universe to man and to woman, who are the diamond and the pearl of the divine crown" (and the orator dragged this phrase triumphantly from one end of the table to the other), "God decided to outdo God and so he created Dona Evarista."

The psychiatrist's wife lowered her eyes with exemplary modesty. Two other ladies, who thought Martim Brito's expression of adulation excessive and audacious, turned to observe its effect on Dona Evarista's husband. They found his face clouded with misgivings, threats, and possibly blood. The provocation was great indeed, thought the two ladies. They prayed God to prevent any tragic occurrence—or, better yet, to postpone it until the next day. The more charitable of the two admitted (to herself) that Dona Evarista was above suspicion, for she was so very unattractive. And yet not all tastes were alike. Maybe some men . . . This idea caused her to tremble again, although less violently than before; less violently, for the psychiatrist was now smiling at Martim Brito.

When everyone had risen from the table, Bacamarte walked over to him and complimented him on his eulogy of Dona Evarista. He said it was a brilliant improvisation, full of magnificent figures of speech. Had Brito himself originated the thought about Dona Evarista's birth or had he taken it from something he had read? No, it was entirely original; it had come to him as he was speaking and he had considered it suitable for use as a rhetorical climax. As a matter of fact, he always leaned toward the bold and daring rather than the tender or jocose. He favored the epic style. Once, for example, he had composed an ode on the fall of the Marquis of Pombal in which he had said that "the foul dragon of Nihilism is crushed in the vengeful claws of the All." And he had invented many other powerful figures of speech. He liked sublime concepts, great and noble images. . . .

"Poor fellow!" thought the psychiatrist. "He's probably suffering from a cerebral lesion. Not a very serious case but worthy of study."

Three days later Dona Evarista learned, to her amazement, that Martim Brito was now living at the Green House. A young man with such beautiful thoughts! The two other ladies attributed his commitment to jealousy on the part of the psychiatrist, for the young man's words had been provocatively bold.

Jealousy? But how, then, can one explain the commitment a short time afterwards of persons of whom the doctor could not possibly have been jealous: innocuous, fun-loving Chico, Fabrício the notary, and many others. The terror grew in intensity. One no longer knew who was sane and who was insane. When their husbands went out in the street, the women of Itaguaí lit candles to Our Lady. And some of the men hired bodyguards to go around with them.

Everyone who could possibly get out of town, did so. One of the fugitives, however, was seized just as he was leaving. He was Gil Bernardes, a friendly, polite young man; so polite, indeed, that he never said hello to anyone without doffing his hat and bowing to the ground. In the street he would sometimes run forty yards to shake the hand of a gentleman or lady—or even of a child, such as the Circuit Judge's little boy. He had a special talent for affability. He owed his acceptance by society not only to his personal charm but also to the noble tenacity with which he withstood any number of refusals, rejections, cold shoulders, and the like, without becoming discouraged. And, once he gained entry to a house, he never left it—nor did its occupants wish him to leave, for he was a delightful guest. Despite his popularity and the self-confidence it engendered, Gil Bernardes turned pale when he heard one day that the psychiatrist was watching him. The following morning he started to leave town but was apprehended and taken to the Green House.

"This must not be permitted to continue."

"Down with tyranny!"

"Despot! Outlaw! Goliath!"

At first such things were said softly and indoors. Later they were shouted in the streets. Rebellion was raising its ugly head. The thought of a petition to the government for the arrest and deportation of Simão Bacamarte occurred to many people even before Porfírio, with eloquent gestures of indignation expounded

it in his barber shop. Let it be noted—and this is one of the finest pages of a somber history—that as soon as the population of the Green House began to grow so rapidly, Porfirio's profits also increased, for many of his customers now asked to be bled; but private interests, said the barber, have to yield to the public welfare. "The tyrant must be overthrown!" So great was his dedication to the cause that he uttered this cry shortly after he heard of the commitment of a man named Coelho who was bringing a lawsuit against him.

"How can anyone call Coelho crazy?" shouted Porfirio.

And no one answered. Everybody said he was perfectly sane. The legal action against the barber, involving some real estate, grew not out of hatred or spite but out of the obscure wording of a deed. Coelho had an excellent reputation. A few individuals, to be sure, avoided him; as soon as they saw him approaching in the distance they ran around corners, ducked into stores. The fact is, he loved conversation—long conversation, drunk down in large draughts. Consequently he was almost never alone. He preferred those who also liked to talk, but he would compromise, if necessary, for a unilateral conversation with the more taciturn. Whenever Father Lopes, who disliked Coelho, saw him taking his leave of someone, he quoted Dante, with a minor change of his own:

"La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto  
Quel seccatore . . ."\*

But the priest's remark did not affect the general esteem in which Coelho was held, for some attributed the remark to mere personal animosity and others thought it was a prayer in Latin.

## VI. The Rebellion

About thirty people allied themselves with the barber. They prepared a formal complaint and took it to the Town Council, which rejected it on the ground that scientific research must be

\* "The pest raised his mouth from his savage repast." Father Lopes substituted *seccatore*, "pest," for Dante's *peccatore*, "sinner." Count Ugolino, the sinner, was gnawing the head of another sinner. *Inferno*, Canto XXXIII.

hampered neither by hostile legislation nor by the misconceptions and prejudices of the mob.

"My advice to you," said the President of the Council, "is to disband and go back to work."

The group could hardly contain its anger. The barber declared that the people would march to the Green House and destroy it; that Itaguaí must no longer be used as a corpse for dissection in the experiments of a medical despot; that several esteemed and even distinguished individuals, not to mention many humble but estimable persons, lay confined in the cubicles of the Green House; that the psychiatrist was clearly motivated by greed, for his compensation varied directly with the number of alleged madmen in his care—

"That's not true," interrupted the President.

"Not true?"

"About two weeks ago we received a communication from the illustrious doctor in which he stated that, in view of the great value, to him as a scientist, of his observations and experiments, he would no longer accept payment from the Council or from the patients' families."

In view of this noble act of self-denial, how could the rebels persist in their attitude? The psychiatrist might, indeed, make mistakes, but obviously he was not motivated by any interest alien to science; and to establish error on his part, something more would be needed than disorderly crowds in the street. So spoke the President, and the entire Council applauded.

The barber meditated for a few moments and then declared that he was invested with a public mandate; he would give Itaguaí no peace until the final destruction of the Green House, "that Bastille of human reason"—an expression he had heard a local poet use and which he now repeated with great vigor. Having spoken, he gave his cohorts a signal and led them out.

The Council was faced with an emergency. It must, at all costs, prevent rebellion and bloodshed. To make matters worse, one of the Councilmen who had supported the President was so impressed by the figure of speech, "Bastille of the human reason," that he changed his mind. He advocated adoption of a measure to liquidate the Green House. After the President had expressed his amazement and indignation, the dissenter observed:

"I know nothing about science, but if so many men whom we

considered sane are locked up as madmen, how do we know that the real madman is not the psychiatrist himself?"

This Councilman, a highly articulate fellow named Sebastião Freitas, spoke at some length. He presented the case against the Green House with restraint but with firm conviction. His colleagues were dumbfounded. The President begged him at least to help preserve law and order by not expressing his opinions in the street, where they might give body and soul to what was so far merely a whirlwind of uncoordinated atoms. This figure of speech counterbalanced to some extent the one about the Bastille. Sebastião Freitas promised to take no action for the present but reserved the right to seek the elimination of the Green House by legal means. And he murmured to himself lovingly: "That Bastille of the human reason!"

Nevertheless, the crowd grew. Not thirty but three hundred now followed the barber, whose nickname ought to be mentioned at this point because it gave the rebellion its name: he was called Stewed Corn, and the movement was therefore known as the Revolt of the Stewed Corners. Storming through the streets toward the Green House, they might well have been compared to the mob that stormed the Bastille, with due allowance, of course, for the difference between Paris and Itaguaí.

A young child attached to the household ran in from the street and told Dona Evarista the news. The psychiatrist's wife was trying on a silk dress (one of the thirty-seven she had bought in Rio).

"It's probably just a bunch of drunks," she said as she changed the location of a pin. "Benedita, is the hem all right?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the slave, who was squatting on the floor, "it looks fine. Just turn a little bit. Like that. It's perfect, ma'am."

"They're not a bunch of drunks, Dona Evarista," said the child in fear. "They're shouting: 'Death to Dr. Bacamarte the tyrant.'"

"Be quiet! Benedita, look over here on the left side. Don't you think the seam is a little crooked? We'll have to rip it and sew it again. Try to make it nice and even this time."

"Death to Dr. Bacamarte! Death to the tyrant!" howled three hundred voices in the street.

The blood left Dona Evarista's face. She stood there like a

statue, petrified with terror. The slave ran instinctively to the back door. The child, whom Dona Evarista had refused to believe, enjoyed a moment of unexpressed but profound satisfaction.

"Death to the psychiatrist!" shouted the voices, now closer than before.

Dona Evarista, although an easy prey to emotions of pleasure, was reasonably steadfast in adversity. She did not faint. She ran to the inside room where her husband was studying. At the moment of her precipitate entrance, the doctor was examining a passage in Averroës. His eyes, blind to external reality but highly perceptive in the realm of the inner life, rose from the book to the ceiling and returned to the book. Twice, Dona Evarista called him loudly by name without his paying her the least attention. The third time, he heard and asked what was troubling her.

"Can't you hear the shouting?"

The psychiatrist listened. The shouts were coming closer and closer, threatening, terrifying. He understood. Rising from the armchair, he shut the book and, with firm, calm step, walked over to the bookcase and put the volume back in its place. The insertion of the volume caused the books on either side of it to be slightly out of line. Simão Bacamarte carefully straightened them. Then he asked his wife to go to her room.

"No, no," begged his worthy helpmeet. "I want to die at your side where I belong."

Simão Bacamarte insisted that she go. He assured her that it was not a matter of life and death and told her that, even if it were, it would be her duty to remain alive. The unhappy lady bowed her head, tearful and obedient.

"Down with the Green House!" shouted the Stewed Corners.

The psychiatrist went out on the front balcony and faced the rebel mob, whose three hundred heads were radiant with civism and somber with fury. When they saw him they shouted: "Diel Diel!" Simão Bacamarte indicated that he wished to speak, but they only shouted the louder. Then the barber waved his hat as a signal to his followers to be silent and told the psychiatrist that he might speak, provided his words did not abuse the patience of the people.

"I shall say little and, if possible, nothing at all. It depends on what it is that you have come to request."

"We aren't requesting anything," replied the barber, trem-

bling with rage. "We are demanding that the Green House be destroyed or at least that all the prisoners in it be freed."

"I don't understand."

"You understand all right, tyrant. We want you to release the victims of your hatred, your whims, your greed. . . ."

The psychiatrist smiled, but the smile of this great man was not perceptible to the eyes of the multitude: it was a slight contraction of two or three muscles, nothing more.

"Gentlemen," he said, "science is a serious thing and it must be treated seriously. For my professional decisions I account to no one but God and the authorities in my special field. If you wish to suggest changes in the administration of the Green House, I am ready to listen to you; but if you wish me to be untrue to myself, further talk would be futile. I could invite you to appoint a committee to come and study the way I treat the madmen who have been committed to my care, but I shall not, for to do so would be to account to you for my methods and this I shall never do to a group of rebels or, for that matter, to laymen of any description."

So spoke the psychiatrist, and the people were astounded at his words. Obviously they had not expected such imperturbability and such resoluteness. Their amazement was even greater when the psychiatrist bowed gravely to them, turned his back, and walked slowly back into the house. The barber soon regained his self-possession and, waving his hat, urged the mob to demolish the Green House. The voices that took up the cry were few and weak. At this decisive moment the barber felt a surging ambition to rule. If he succeeded in overthrowing the psychiatrist and destroying the Green House, he might well take over the Town Council, dominate the other municipal authorities, and make himself the master of Itaguaí. For some years now he had striven to have his name included in the ballots from which the Councilmen were selected by lot, but his petitions were denied because his position in society was considered incompatible with such a responsibility. It was a case of now or never. Besides, he had carried the street riot to such a point that defeat would mean prison and perhaps banishment or even the scaffold. Unfortunately, the psychiatrist's reply had taken most of the steam out of the Stewed Corners. When the barber perceived this, he felt like

shouting: "Wretches! Cowards!" But he contained himself and merely said:

"My friends, let us fight to the end! The salvation of Itaguaí is in your worthy and heroic hands. Let us destroy the foul prison that confines or threatens your children and parents, your mothers and sisters, your relatives and friends, and you yourselves. Do you want to be thrown into a dungeon and starved on bread and water or maybe whipped to death?"

The mob bestirred itself, murmured, shouted, and gathered around the barber. The revolt was emerging from its stupor and threatening to demolish the Green House.

"Come on!" shouted Porfírio, waving his hat.

"Come on!" echoed his followers.

At that moment a corps of dragoons turned the corner and came marching toward the mob.

## VII. The Unexpected

The mob appeared stupefied by the arrival of the dragoons; the Stewed Corners could hardly believe that the force of the law was being exerted against them. The dragoons halted and their captain ordered the crowd to disperse. Some of the rebels felt inclined to obey, but others rallied around the barber, who boldly replied to the captain:

"We shall not disperse. If you wish, you may take our lives, but nothing else: we will not yield our honor or our rights, for on them depends the salvation of Itaguaí."

Nothing could have been more imprudent or more natural than this reply. It reflected the ecstasy inspired by great crises. Perhaps it reflected also an excess of confidence in the captain's forbearance, a confidence soon dispelled by the captain's order to charge. What followed is indescribable. The mob howled its fury. Some managed to escape by climbing into windows or running down the street, but the majority, inspired by the barber's words, snorted with anger and stood their ground. The defeat of the Stewed Corners appeared imminent, when suddenly one third of the dragoons, for reasons not set forth in the chronicles, went over to the side of the rebels. This unexpected reënforce-

ment naturally heartened the Stewed Corners and discouraged the ranks of legality. The loyal soldiers refused to attack their comrades and, one by one, joined them, with the result that in a few minutes the entire aspect of the struggle had changed. The captain, defended by only a handful of his men against a compact mass of rebels and soldiers, gave up and surrendered his sword to the barber.

The triumphant rebels did not lose an instant. They carried the wounded into the nearest houses and headed for the town hall. The people and the troops fraternized. They shouted *vivas* for the King, the Viceroy, Itaguaí, and "our great leader, Porfirio." The barber marched at their head, wielding the sword as dexterously as if it had been merely an unusually long razor. Victory hovered like a halo above him, and the dignity of government informed his every movement.

The Councilmen, watching from the windows, thought that the troops had captured the Stewed Corners. The Council formally resolved to send a petition to the Viceroy asking him to give an extra month's pay to the dragoons, "whose high devotion to duty has saved Itaguaí from the chaos of rebellion and mob rule." This phrase was proposed by Sebastião Freitas, whose defense of the rebels had so scandalized his colleagues. But the legislators were soon disillusioned. They could now clearly hear the *vivas* for the barber and the shouts of "death to the Councilmen" and "death to the psychiatrist." The President held his head high and said: "Whatever may be our fate, let us never forget that we are the servants of His Majesty and of the people of Itaguaí." Sebastião suggested that perhaps they could best serve the Crown and the town by sneaking out the back door and going to the Circuit Judge's office for advice and help, but all the other members of the Council rejected this suggestion.

A few seconds later the barber and some of his lieutenants entered the chamber and told the Town Council that it had been deposed. The Councilmen surrendered and were put in jail. Then the barber's friends urged him to assume the dictatorship of Itaguaí in the name of His Majesty. Porfirio accepted this responsibility, although, as he told them, he was fully aware of its weight and of the thorny problems it entailed. He said also that he would be unable to rule without their coöperation, which they promptly promised him. The barber then went to the window and

told the people what had happened; they shouted their approval. He chose the title, "Town Protector in the Name of His Majesty and of the People." He immediately issued several important orders, official communications from the new government, a detailed statement to the Viceroy with many protestations of obedience to His Majesty, and finally the following short but forceful proclamation to the people:

Fellow Itaguaians:

A corrupt and irresponsible Town Council was conspiring ignominiously against His Majesty and against the people. Public opinion had condemned it, and now a handful of citizens, with the help of His Majesty's brave dragoons, have dissolved it. By unanimous consent I am empowered to rule until His Majesty chooses to take formal action in the premises. Itaguaians, I ask only for your trust and for your help in restoring peace and the public funds, recklessly squandered by the Council. You may count on me to make every personal sacrifice for the common good, and you may rest assured that we shall have the full support of the Crown.

Porfirio Caetano das Neves

Town Protector in the Name of His Majesty and of the People

Everyone remarked that the proclamation said nothing whatever about the Green House, and some considered this ominous. The danger seemed all the greater when, in the midst of the important changes that were taking place, the psychiatrist committed to the Green House some seven or eight new patients, including a relative of the Protector. Everybody erroneously interpreted Bacamarte's action as a challenge to the barber and thought it likely that within twenty-four hours the terrible prison would be destroyed and the psychiatrist would be in chains.

The day ended happily. While the crier with the noisemaker went from corner to corner reading the proclamation, the people walked about the streets and swore they would be willing to die for the Protector. There were very few shouts of opposition to the Green House, for the people were confident that the government would soon liquidate it. Porfirio declared the day an official holiday and, to promote an alliance between the temporal power and the spiritual power, he asked Father Lopes to celebrate the occasion with a *Te Deum*. The Vicar issued a public refusal.

"May I at least assume," asked the barber with a threatening

frown, "that you will not ally yourself with the enemies of the government?"

"How can I ally myself with your enemies," replied Father Lopes (if one can call it a reply), "when you have no enemies? You say in your proclamation that you are ruling by unanimous consent."

The barber could not help smiling. He really had almost no opposition. Apart from the captain of dragoons, the Council, and some of the town bigwigs, everybody acclaimed him; and even the bigwigs did not actually oppose him. Indeed, the people blessed the name of the man who would finally free Itaguaí from the Green House and from the terrible Simão Bacamarte.

### VIII. The Druggist's Dilemma

The next day Porfírio and two of his aides-de-camp left the government palace (the new name of the town hall) and set out for the residence of Simão Bacamarte. The barber knew that it would have been more fitting for him to have ordered Bacamarte to come to the palace, but he was afraid the psychiatrist would refuse and so he decided to exercise forbearance in the use of his powers.

Crispim Soares was in bed at the time. The druggist was undergoing continual mental torture these days. His intimacy with Simão Bacamarte called him to the doctor's defense, and Porfírio's victory called him to the barber's side. This victory, together with the intensity of the hatred for Bacamarte, made it unprofitable and perhaps dangerous for Crispim to continue to associate with the doctor. But the druggist's wife, a masculine woman who was very close to Dona Evarista, told him that he owed the psychiatrist an obligation of loyalty. The dilemma appeared insoluble, so Crispim avoided it by the only means he could devise: he said he was sick, and went to bed.

The next day his wife told him that Porfírio and some other men were headed for Simão Bacamarte's house.

"They're going to arrest him," thought the druggist.

One idea led to another. He imagined that their next step would be to arrest him, Crispim Soares, as an accessory. The

therapeutic effect of this thought was remarkable. The druggist jumped out of bed and, despite his wife's protests, dressed and went out. The chroniclers all agree that Mrs. Soares found great comfort in the nobility of her husband, who, she assumed, was going to the defense of his friend, and they note with perspicacity the immense power of a thought, even if untrue; for the druggist walked not to the house of the psychiatrist but straight to the government palace. When he got there he expressed disappointment that the barber was out; he had wanted to assure him of his loyalty and support. Indeed, he had intended to do this the day before but had been prevented by illness—an illness that he now evidenced by a forced cough. The high officials to whom he spoke knew of his intimacy with the psychiatrist and therefore appreciated the significance of this declaration of loyalty. They treated the druggist with the greatest respect. They told him that the Protector had gone to the Green House on important business but would soon return. They offered him a chair, refreshments, and flattery. They told him that the cause of the illustrious Porfírio was the cause of every true patriot—a proposition with which Crispim Soares heartily agreed and which he proposed to affirm in a vigorous communication to the Viceroy.

### IX. Two Beautiful Cases

The psychiatrist received the barber immediately. He told him that he had no means of resistance and was therefore prepared to submit to the new government. He asked only that they not force him to be present at the destruction of the Green House.

"The doctor is under a misapprehension," said Porfírio after a pause. "We are not vandals. Rightly or wrongly, everybody thinks that most of the people locked up here are perfectly sane. But the government recognizes that the question is purely scientific and that scientific issues cannot be resolved by legislation. Moreover, the Green House is now an established municipal institution. We must therefore find a compromise that will both permit its continued operation and placate the public."

The psychiatrist could not conceal his amazement. He confessed that he had expected not only destruction of the Green

House but also his own arrest and banishment. The last thing in the world he would have expected was—

"That is because you don't appreciate the grave responsibility of government," interrupted the barber. "The people, in their blindness, may feel righteous indignation about something that they do not understand; they have a right, then, to ask the government to act along certain lines. The government, however, must remember its duty to promote the public interest, whether or not this interest is in full accord with the demands made by the public itself. The revolution, which yesterday overthrew a corrupt and despicable Town Council, screams for destruction of the Green House. But the government must remain calm and objective. It knows that elimination of the Green House would not eliminate insanity. It knows that the mentally ill must receive treatment and that it even lacks the ability to distinguish the sane from the insane. These are matters for science, not for politics. They are matters requiring the sort of delicate, trained judgment that you, not we, are fitted to exercise. All I ask is that you help me give some degree of satisfaction to the people of Itaguaí. If you and the government present a united front and propose a compromise of some sort, the people will accept it. Let me suggest, unless you have something better to propose, that we free those patients who are practically cured and those whose illnesses are relatively mild. In this way we can show how benign and generous we are without seriously handicapping your work."

Simão Bacamarte remained silent for about three minutes and then asked: "How many casualties were there in the fighting yesterday?"

The barber thought the question a little odd, but quickly replied that eleven had been killed and twenty-five wounded.

"Eleven dead, twenty-five wounded," repeated the psychiatrist two or three times.

Then he said that he did not like the barber's suggestion and that he would try to devise a better compromise, which he would communicate to the government within a few days. He asked a number of questions about the events of the day before: the attack by the dragoons, the defense, the change of sides by the dragoons, the Council's resistance, and so on. The barber replied

in detail, with emphasis on the discredit into which the Council had fallen. He admitted that the government did not yet have the support of the most important men in the community and added that the psychiatrist might be very helpful in this connection. The government would be pleased, indeed, if it could count among its friends the loftiest spirit in Itaguaí and, doubtless, in the entire kingdom. Nothing that the barber said, however, changed the expression on the doctor's austere face. Bacamarte evidenced neither vanity nor modesty; he listened in silence, as impassive as a stone god.

"Eleven dead, twenty-five wounded," repeated the psychiatrist after the visitors had left. "Two beautiful cases. This barber shows unmistakable symptoms of psychopathic duplicity. As for proof of the insanity of the people who acclaim him, what more could one ask than the fact that eleven were killed and twenty-five wounded? Two beautiful cases!"

"Long live our glorious Protector!" shouted thirty-odd people who had been awaiting the barber in front of the house.

The psychiatrist went to the window and heard part of the barber's speech:

". . . for my main concern, day and night, is to execute faithfully the will of the people. Trust in me and you will not be disappointed. I ask of you only one thing: be peaceful, maintain order. For order, my friends, is the foundation on which government must rest."

"Long live Porfírio!" shouted the people, waving their hats.

"Two beautiful cases," murmured the psychiatrist.

## X. The Restoration

Within a week there were fifty additional patients in the Green House, all of them strong supporters of the new government. The people felt outraged. The government was stunned; it did not know how to react. João Pina, another barber, said openly that Porfírio had "sold his birthright to Simão Bacamarte for a pot of gold"—a phrase that attracted some of the more indignant citizens to Pina's side. Porfírio, seeing his competitor at the head of a potential insurrection, knew that he would be overthrown if he

did not immediately change his course. He therefore issued two decrees, one abolishing the Green House and the other banishing the psychiatrist from Itaguaí.

João Pina, however, explained clearly and eloquently that these decrees were a hoax, a mere face-saving gesture. Two hours later Porfírio was deposed and João Pina assumed the heavy burden of government. Pina found copies of the proclamation to the people, the explanatory statement to the Viceroy, and other documents issued by his predecessor. He had new originals made and sent them out over his own name and signature. The chronicles note that the wording of the new documents was a little different. For example, where the other barber had spoken of "a corrupt and irresponsible Town Council," João Pina spoke of "a body contaminated by French doctrines wholly contrary to the sacrosanct interests of His Majesty."

The new dictator barely had time to dispatch the documents when a military force sent by the Viceroy entered the town and restored order. At the psychiatrist's request, the troops immediately handed over to him Porfírio and some fifty other persons, and promised to deliver seventeen more of the barber's followers as soon as they had sufficiently recovered from their wounds.

This period in the crisis of Itaguaí represents the culmination of Simão Bacamarte's influence. He got whatever he wanted. For example, the Town Council, now reestablished, promptly consented to have Sebastião Freitas committed to the asylum. The psychiatrist had requested this in view of the extraordinary inconsistency of the Councilman's opinions, which Bacamarte considered a clear sign of mental illness. Subsequently the same thing happened to Crispim Soares. When the psychiatrist learned that his close friend and staunch supporter had suddenly gone over to the side of the Stewed Corners, he ordered him to be seized and taken to the Green House. The druggist did not deny his switch of allegiance but explained that he had been motivated by an overwhelming fear of the new government. Simão Bacamarte accepted the explanation as true; he pointed out, however, that fear is a common symptom of mental abnormality.

Perhaps the most striking proof of the psychiatrist's influence was the docility with which the Town Council surrendered to him its own President. This worthy official had declared that the affront to the Council could be washed away only by the

blood of the Stewed Corners. Bacamarte learned of this through the Secretary of the Council, who repeated the President's words with immense enthusiasm. The psychiatrist first committed the Secretary to the Green House and then proceeded to the town hall. He told the Council that its President was suffering from hemoferal mania, an illness that he planned to study in depth, with, he hoped, immense benefit to the world. The Council hesitated for a moment and then acquiesced.

From that day on, the population of the asylum increased even more rapidly than before. A person could not utter the most commonplace lie, even a lie that clearly benefited him, without being immediately committed to the Green House. Scandal-mongers, dandies, people who spent hours at puzzles, people who habitually inquired into the private lives of others, officials puffed up with authority—the psychiatrist's agents brought them all in. He spared sweethearts but not flirts, for he maintained that the former obeyed a healthful impulse, but that the latter yielded to a morbid desire for conquest. He discriminated against neither the avaricious nor the prodigal: both were committed to the asylum; this led people to say that the psychiatrist's concept of madness included practically everybody.

Some of the chroniclers express doubts about Simão Bacamarte's integrity. They note that, at his instigation, the Town Council authorized all persons who boasted of noble blood to wear a silver ring on the thumb of the left hand. These chroniclers point out that, as a consequence of the ordinance, a jeweler who was a close friend of Bacamarte became rich. Another consequence, however, was the commitment of the ring-wearers to the Green House; and the treatment of these unfortunate people, rather than the enrichment of his friend, may well have been the objective of the illustrious physician. Nobody was sure what conduct on the part of the ring-wearers had betrayed their illness. Some thought it was their tendency to gesticulate a great deal, especially with the left hand, no matter where they were—at home, in the street, even in church. Everybody knows that madmen gesticulate a great deal.

"Where will this man stop?" said the important people of the town. "Ah, if only we had supported the Stewed Corners!"

One day, when preparations were being made for a ball to be held that evening in the town hall, Itaguaí was shocked to hear

that Simão Bacarmarte had sent his own wife to the asylum. At first everyone thought it was a gag of some sort. But it was the absolute truth. Dona Evarista had been committed at two o'clock in the morning.

"I had long suspected that she was a sick woman," said the psychiatrist in response to a question from Father Lopes. "Her moderation in all other matters was hard to reconcile with her mania for silks, velvets, laces, and jewelry, a mania that began immediately after her return from Rio de Janeiro. It was then that I started to observe her closely. Her conversation was always about these objects. If I talked to her about the royal courts of earlier times, she wanted to know what kind of clothes the women wore. If a lady visited her while I was out, the first thing my wife told me, even before mentioning the purpose of the visit, was how the woman was dressed and which jewels or articles of clothing were pretty and which were ugly. Once (I think Your Reverence will remember this) she said she was going to make a new dress every year for Our Lady of the Mother Church. All these symptoms indicated a serious condition. Tonight, however, the full gravity of her illness became manifest. She had selected the entire outfit she would wear to the ball and had it all fixed and ready. All except one thing: she couldn't decide between a garnet necklace and a sapphire necklace. The day before yesterday she asked me which she should wear. I told her it didn't matter, that they both were very becoming. Yesterday at lunch she repeated the question. After dinner she was silent and pensive. I asked her what was the matter. 'I want to wear my beautiful garnet necklace, but my sapphire one is so lovely.' 'Then wear the sapphire necklace.' 'But then I can't wear the garnet necklace.' In the middle of the night, about half-past one, I awoke. She was not in bed. I got up and went to the dressing-room. There she sat with the two necklaces, in front of the mirror, trying on first one and then the other. An obvious case of dementia. I had her put away immediately."

Father Lopes said nothing. The explanation did not wholly satisfy him. Perceiving this, the psychiatrist told him that the specific illness of Dona Evarista was *vestimania*; it was by no means incurable.

"I hope to have her well within two weeks and, in any event,

I expect to learn a great deal from the study of her case," said the psychiatrist in conclusion.

This personal sacrifice greatly enhanced the public image of the illustrious doctor. Suspicion, distrust, accusations were all negated by the commitment of his own wife whom he loved with all his heart. No one could ever again charge him with motives other than those of science itself. He was beyond doubt a man of integrity and profound objectivity, a combination of Cato and Hippocrates.

## XI. Release and Joy

And now let the reader share with the people of Itaguai their amazement on learning one day that the madmen of the Green House had been released.

"All of them?"

"All of them."

"Impossible. Some, maybe. But all?"

"All. He said so himself in a communiqué that he sent today to the Town Council."

The psychiatrist informed the Council, first, that he had checked the statistics and had found that four-fifths of the population of Itaguai was in the Green House; second, that this disproportionately large number of patients had led him to reexamine his fundamental theory of mental illness, a theory that classified as sick all people who were mentally unbalanced; third, that as a consequence of this reexamination in the light of the statistics, he had concluded not only that his theory was unsound but also that the exactly contrary doctrine was true—that is, that normality lay in a lack of equilibrium and that the abnormal, the really sick, were the well balanced, the thoroughly rational; fourth, that in view of the foregoing he would release the persons now confined and would commit to the Green House all persons found to be mentally ill under the new theory; fifth, that he would continue to devote himself to the pursuit of scientific truth and trusted that the Council would continue to give him its support; and sixth, that he would give back the funds he had received for the board and lodging of the patients, less the amounts

already expended, which could be verified by examination of his records and accounts.

The amazement of Itaguai was no greater than the joy of the relatives and friends of the former patients. Dinners, dances, Chinese lanterns, music, everything to celebrate the happy occasion. I shall not describe the festivities, for they are merely peripheral to this history; suffice it to say that they were elaborate, long, and memorable.

In the midst of all this rejoicing, nobody noticed the last part of the fourth item in the psychiatrist's communiqué.

## XII. The Last Part of the Fourth Item

The lanterns were taken down, the ex-patients resumed their former lives, everything appeared normal. Councilman Freitas and the President returned to their accustomed places, and the Council governed Itaguai without external interference. Porfírio the barber had "experienced everything," as the poet said of Napoleon; indeed, Porfírio had experienced more than Napoleon, for Napoleon was never committed to the Green House. The barber now found the obscure security of his trade preferable to the brilliant calamities of power. He was tried for his crimes and convicted, but the people begged His Majesty to pardon their ex-Protector, and His Majesty did so. The authorities decided not to prosecute João Pina, for he had overthrown an unlawful ruler. The chroniclers maintain that Pina's absolution inspired our adage:

A judge will never throw the book  
At crook who steals from other crook.

An immoral adage, but immensely useful.

There were no more complaints against the psychiatrist. There was not even resentment for his past acts. Indeed, the former patients were grateful because he had declared them sane; they gave a ball in his honor. The chroniclers relate that Dona Evarista decided at first to leave her husband but changed her mind when she contemplated the emptiness of a life without him. Her devotion to this high-minded man overcame her wounded vanity, and they lived together more happily than ever before.

On the basis of the new psychiatric doctrine set forth in the communiqué, Crispim Soares concluded that his prudence in allying himself with the revolution had been a manifestation of mental health. He was deeply touched by Bacamarte's magnanimity: the psychiatrist had extended his hand to his old friend upon releasing him from the Green House.

"A great man," said the druggist to his wife.

We need not specifically note the release of Costa, Coelho, and the other patients named in this history. Each was now free to resume his previous way of life. Martim Brito, for example, who had been committed because of a speech in excessive praise of Dona Evarista, now made another in honor of the doctor, "whose exalted genius lifted its wings and flew far above the common herd until it rivaled the sun in altitude and in brilliance."

"Thank you," said the psychiatrist. "Obviously I was right to set you free."

Meanwhile, the Town Council passed, without debate, an ordinance to take care of the last part of the fourth item in Bacamarte's communiqué. The ordinance authorized the psychiatrist to commit to the Green House all persons whom he found to be mentally well balanced. But, remembering its painful experience in connection with public reaction to the asylum, the Council added a proviso in which it stated that, since the purpose of the ordinance was to provide an opportunity for the doctor to test his new theory, the authorization would remain in effect for only one year, and the Council reserved the right to close the asylum at any time if the maintenance of public order so required.

Sebastião Freitas proposed an amendment to the effect that under no circumstances were members of the Council to be committed to the Green House. The amendment was adopted almost unanimously. The only dissenting vote was cast by Councilman Galvão. He argued calmly that, in authorizing a scientific experiment on the people of Itaguai, the Council would itself be unscientific if it exempted its members or any other segment of the population from subjection to the experiment. "Our public office," he said, "does not exclude us from the human race." But he was shouted down.

Simão Bacamarte accepted the ordinance with all its restric-

tions. As for the exemption of the Councilmen, he declared that they were in no danger whatever of being committed, for their votes in favor of the amendment showed clearly that they were mentally unbalanced. He asked only that Galvão be delivered to him, for this Councilman had exhibited exceptional mental equilibrium, not only in his objection to the amendment but even more in the calm that he had maintained in the face of unreasonable opposition and abuse on the part of his colleagues. The Council immediately granted the request.

Under the new theory a few acts or statements by a person could not establish his abnormality: a long examination and a thorough study of his history were necessary. Father Lopes, for example, was not taken to the Green House until thirty days after the passage of the ordinance. In the case of the druggist's wife fifty days of study were required. Crispim Soares raged about the streets, telling everybody that he would tear the tyrant's ears off. One of the men to whom he spoke—a fellow who, as everyone knew, had an aversion for Bacamarte—ran and warned the psychiatrist. Bacamarte thanked him warmly and locked him up in recognition of his rectitude and his good will even toward someone he disliked, signs of perfect mental equilibrium.

"This is a very unusual case," said the doctor to Dona Evarista.

By the time Crispim Soares arrived at the psychiatrist's house, sorrow had overcome his anger. He did not tear Bacamarte's ears off. The psychiatrist tried to comfort his old friend. He told him that his wife might be suffering from a cerebral lesion, that there was a fair chance of recovery, and that meanwhile he must of course keep her confined. The psychiatrist considered it desirable, however, for Soares to spend a good deal of time with her, for the druggist's guile and intellectual dishonesty might help to overcome the moral superiority that the doctor found in his patient.

"There is no reason," he said, "why you and your wife should not eat lunch and dinner together every day at the Green House. You may even stay with her at night."

Simão Bacamarte's words placed the druggist in a new dilemma. He wanted to be with his wife, but at the same time he dreaded returning to the Green House. He remained undecided

for several minutes. Then Dona Evarista released him from the dilemma: she promised to visit his wife frequently and to bear messages between the two. Crispim Soares kissed her hands in gratitude. His pusillanimous egoism struck the psychiatrist as almost sublime.

Although it took Bacamarte almost half a year to find eighteen patients for the Green House, he did not relax his efforts to discover the insane. He went from street to street, from house to house, observing, inquiring, taking notes. And when he committed someone to the asylum, it was with the same sense of accomplishment with which he had formerly committed dozens at a time. This very disproportion confirmed his new theory. At last the truth about mental illness was definitely known. One day Bacamarte committed the Circuit Judge to the Green House, after weeks of detailed study of the man's acts and thorough interrogation of his friends, who included all the important people of Itaguai.

More than once the psychiatrist was on the point of sending someone to the Green House, only to discover a serious shortcoming at the last moment. In the case of the lawyer Salustiano, for example, he thought he had found so perfect a combination of intellectual and moral qualities that it would be dangerous to leave the man at large. He told one of his agents to bring the man in, but the agent, who had known many lawyers, suspected that he might really be sane and persuaded Bacamarte to authorize a little experiment. The agent had a close friend who was charged with having falsified a will. He advised this friend to engage Salustiano as his lawyer.

"Do you really think he'll take the case?"

"Sure he will. Confess everything to him. He'll get you off."

The agent's friend went to the lawyer, admitted that he had falsified the will, and begged him to accept the case. Salustiano did not turn the man away. He studied the charges and supporting evidence. In court he argued at great length, proving conclusively that the will was genuine. After a verdict of acquittal the defendant received the estate under the terms of the will. To this experiment both he and the learned counselor owed their freedom.

Very little escapes the comprehension of a man of genuine insight. For some time Simão Bacamarte had noted the wisdom,

patience, and dedication of the agent who devised the experiment. Consequently he determined to commit him to the Green House, in which he gave him one of the choicest cubicles.

The patients were segregated into classes. In one gallery lived only those whose outstanding moral quality was modesty. The notably tolerant occupied another gallery, and still others were set aside for the truthful, the guileless, the loyal, the magnanimous, the wise. Naturally, the friends and relatives of the madmen railed against the new theory. Some even tried to persuade the Town Council to cancel the authorization it had given Bacamarte. The Councilmen, however, remembered with bitterness the word of their former colleague Galvão; they did not wish to see him back in their midst, and so they refused. Simão Bacamarte sent a message to the Council, not thanking it but congratulating it on this act of personal spite.

Some of the important people of Itaguaí then went secretly to the barber Porfírio. They promised to support him with men, money, and influence if he would lead another movement against the psychiatrist and the Town Council. He replied that ambition had once led him to violent transgression of the law but that he now recognized the folly of such conduct; that the Council, in its wisdom, had authorized the psychiatrist to conduct his new experiment for a year; that anybody who objected should wait till the end of the year and then, if the Council insisted on renewing the authorization, should petition the Viceroy; that he would not recommend recourse again to a method that had done no good and had caused several deaths and other casualties, which would be an eternal burden on his conscience.

The psychiatrist listened with immense interest when one of his secret agents told him what Porfírio had said. Two days later the barber was locked up in the Green House. "You're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't," observed the new patient.

At the end of the year allowed for verification of the new theory, the Town Council authorized the psychiatrist to continue his work for another six months in order to experiment with methods of therapy. The result of this additional experimentation is so significant that it merits ten chapters, but I shall content myself with one. It will provide the reader with an inspiring example of scientific objectivity and selflessness.

### XIII. Plus Ultra

However diligent and perceptive he may have been in the discovery of madmen, Simão Bacamarte outdid himself when he undertook to cure them. All the chroniclers agree that he brought about the most amazing recoveries.

It is indeed hard to imagine a more rational system of therapy. Having divided the patients into classes according to their predominant moral qualities, the doctor now proceeded to break down those qualities. He applied a remedy in each case to inculcate exactly the opposite characteristic, selecting the specific medicine and dose best suited to the patient's age, personality, and social position.

The cases of modesty may serve as examples. In some, a wig, a fine coat, or a cane would suffice to restore reason to the madman. In more difficult cases the psychiatrist resorted to diamonds, honorary degrees, and the like. The illness of one modest lunatic, a poet, resisted every sort of therapy. Bacamarte had almost given up, when an idea occurred to him: he would have the crier with the noisemaker proclaim the patient to be as great as Garcão or Pindar.

"It was like a miracle," said the poet's mother to one of her friends. "My boy is entirely well now. A miracle . . ."

Another patient, also in the modest class, seemed incurable. The specific remedy used for the poet would not work, for this patient was not a writer; indeed, he could barely sign his name. But Dr. Bacamarte proved equal to the challenge. He decided to have the patient made Secretary to the Itaguaí branch of the Royal Academy. The Secretary and the President of each branch were appointed by the Crown. They enjoyed the privileges of being addressed as Excellency and of wearing a gold medallion. The government at Lisbon refused Bacamarte's request at first; but after the psychiatrist explained that he did not ask the appointment as a real honor for his patient but merely as a therapeutic device to cure a difficult case, and after the Minister of Overseas Possessions (a cousin of the patient) intervened, the government finally granted the request. The consequent cure was hailed as another miracle.

"Wonderful, really wonderful!" said everybody upon seeing the healthy, prideful expression on the faces of the two exammen.

Bacamarte's method was ultimately successful in every case, although in a few the patient's dominant quality proved impregnable. In these cases the psychiatrist won out by attacking at another point, like a good military strategist.

By the end of five months all the patients had been cured. The Green House was empty. Councilman Galvão, so cruelly afflicted with fairness and moderation, had the good fortune to lose an uncle; I say good fortune, for the uncle's will was ambiguous and Galvão obtained a favorable interpretation of it by bribing two judges. With customary integrity, the doctor admitted that the cure had been effected not by him but by nature's *vis medicatrix*. It was quite otherwise in the case of Father Lopes. Bacamarte knew that the priest was utterly ignorant of Greek, and therefore asked him to make a critical analysis of the Septuagint. Father Lopes accepted the task. In two months he had written a book on the subject and was released from the Green House. As for the druggist's wife, she remained there only a short time.

"Why doesn't Crispim come to visit me?" she asked every day.

They gave her various answers and finally told her the plain truth. The worthy matron could not contain her shame and indignation. Her explosions of wrath included such expressions as "rat," "coward," and "he even cheats on prescriptions." Simão Bacamarte remarked that, whether or not these characterizations of her husband were true, they clearly established the lady's return to sanity. He promptly released her.

If you think the psychiatrist was radiant with happiness on seeing the last guest leave the Green House, you apparently do not yet understand the man. *Plus ultra* was his motto. For him the discovery of the true theory of mental illness was not enough, nor was the establishment in Itaguai of the reign of reason with the total elimination of psychological abnormality. *Plus ultra!* Something told him that his new theory bore within itself a better, newer theory.

"Let us see," he said to himself, "if I can discover the ultimate, underlying truth."

He paced the length of the immense room, past bookcase after bookcase—the largest library in His Majesty's overseas pos-

sessions. A gold-embroidered, damask dressing-gown (a gift from a university) enveloped the regal and austere body of the illustrious physician. The extensive top of his head, which the incessant cogitations of the scientist had rendered bald, was covered by a wig. His feet, neither dainty nor gross but perfectly proportioned to his body, were encased in a pair of ordinary shoes with plain brass buckles. Note the distinction: only those elements that bore some relationship to his work as a scientist were in any sense luxurious; the rest was simple and temperate.

And so the psychiatrist walked up and down his vast library, lost in thought, alien to everything but the dark problem of psychopathology. Suddenly he stopped. Standing before a window, with his left elbow resting on his open right hand and his chin on his closed left hand, he asked himself:

"Were they all really insane? Did I really cure them? Or is not mental imbalance so natural and inherent that it was bound to assert itself with or without my help?"

He soon arrived at this conclusion: the apparently well-balanced minds that he had just "cured" had really been unbalanced all the time, just like the obviously sane minds of the rest of the people. Their apparent illness was superficial and transient.

The psychiatrist contemplated his new doctrine with mixed feelings. He was happy because, after such long study, experimentation, and struggle, he could at last affirm the ultimate truth: there never were and never would be any madmen in Itaguai or anywhere else. But he was unhappy because a doubt assailed him. In the field of psychiatry a generalization so broad, so absolute, was almost inevitably erroneous. If he could find just one undeniably well balanced, virtuous, insane man, the new theory would be acceptable—not as an absolute, exceptionless principle, which was inadmissible, but as a general rule applicable to all but the most extraordinary cases.

According to the chroniclers, this difficulty constituted the most dreadful of the spiritual tempests through which the courageous Bacamarte passed in the course of his stormy professional life. But tempests terrify only the weak. After twenty minutes a gentle but radiant dawn dispelled the darkness from the face of the psychiatrist.

"Of course. That's it, of course."

What Simão Bacamarte meant was that he had found in him-

self the perfect, undeniable case of insanity. He possessed wisdom, patience, tolerance, truthfulness, loyalty, and moral fortitude—all the qualities that go to make an utter madman.

But then he questioned his own self-observation. Surely he must be imperfect in some way. To ascertain the truth about himself he convoked a gathering of his friends and questioned them. He begged them to answer with absolute frankness. They all agreed that he had not been mistaken.

"No defects?"

"None at all," they replied in chorus.

"No vices?"

"None."

"Perfect in every respect?"

"In every respect."

"No, impossible!" cried the psychiatrist. "I cannot believe that I am so far superior to my fellow men. You are letting yourselves be influenced by your affection for me."

His friends insisted. The psychiatrist hesitated, but Father Lopes made it difficult for him not to accept their judgment.

"Do you know why you are reluctant to recognize in yourself the lofty qualities which we all see so clearly?" said the priest. "It is because you have an additional quality that enhances all the others: modesty."

Simão Bacamarte bowed his head. He was both sad and happy, but more happy than sad. He immediately committed himself to the Green House. His wife and his friends begged him not to. They told him he was perfectly sane. They wept, they pleaded. All in vain.

"This is a matter of science, of a new doctrine," he said, "and I am the first instance of its application. I embody both theory and practice."

"Simão! Simão, my love!" cried his wife. Her face was bathed in tears.

But the doctor, his eyes alight with scientific conviction, gently pushed her away. He entered the Green House, shut the door behind him, and set about the business of curing himself. The chroniclers state, however, that he died seventeen months later as insane as ever. Some even venture the opinion that he was the only madman (in the vulgar or non-Bacamartian sense) ever committed to the asylum. But this opinion should not be

taken seriously. It was based on remarks attributed to Father Lopes—doubtless erroneously, for, as everybody knew, the priest liked and admired the psychiatrist. In any case, the people of Itaguaí buried the mortal remains of Simão Bacamarte with great pomp and solemnity.

*Translated by WILLIAM L. GROSSMAN*