

## XXVIII

### WEDDING DRESS AND ANCIENT JEWELRY

ANOTHER night at Cée worked to its slow end in grateful preparation for the six-thirty bus to Santiago. We came out to a glittering road and a black sky and then, in a tedious, unconvincing dawn, rattled round misty hills and roared by unseen bridges over the head waters of the Ezaro, over the well-grown Tambre. Santiago's towers, appearing at noon, projected a gray of rain-sodden tiles upon the gray of sullen cloud, but the sight of them was as welcome as though they had been wrought of pure gold and set in a field of cerulean enamel.



Were we never to leave Santiago? Things and rumours of things kept turning up to detain us, a countrywoman's wedding dress, a collection of indigenous art objects. The dress was near Lestedo on the farm of the D—'s who, upon hearing that we had been sent by the Canon, received us most kindly. Their house, facing a yard crowded with corn shocks, logs, and farm implements, looked new. Holes left by the masons' scaffold had not been filled, and the bright orange of the roof tiles and the gray of the rubble walls were still undulled with lichens. A farmer, apparently, built by the same rule as a count or a marquis. Here, as in a *pazo*, were two long stories with a middle entrance flanked on the ground floor by stable and kitchen; the living rooms lay overhead.

In the dark vestibule Señora D—, shooing hens with her apron, failed to notice Father's removal of his hat, but in the bright chillness of the upper hall his white hair impressed her, and she began

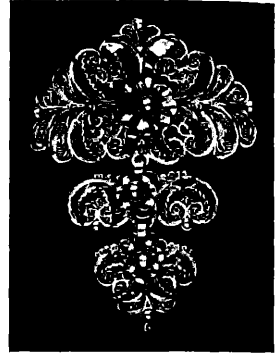
to insist that he cover it. "¡Cúbrase, cúbrase, señore, cúbrase!"



Father bowed without obeying, and a kind of contest went on between them, until, having seated him in a straight, solid chair, she finished the argument by seizing the hat and clapping it on his head.

With Father subdued and afraid to uncover lest he offend by seeming not to prize the ancient privilege of kings and nobles, the *señora* led her

daughter and me into a room adjoining. Beside a chintz-covered bed stood a large chest of cedar wood strapped with iron, fitted with a plain oval key escutcheon and with a hasp and lock plate of seventeenth-century design; the sides were mortised together with tenons cut in crude sunbursts. The chest had been brought from Andalucía, remarked Señora D—, opening the lock. As she raised the lid, an odour of spoiled



fruit blended with the prevailing mustiness of fresh plaster. With an exclamation she took up a stained kerchief and then a blue, pulpy orange. Placed in the chest as a sachet, the orange had spoiled instead of drying! Tissue paper rustled sharply as the *señora* burrowed into her treasures. Then came a sigh of relief, no stain had reached the wedding dress.

That cherished creation was black and made in the regional style, a broadcloth and velvet overskirt with

matching shoulder cape. There was also jewelry "of the great-great-

grandmother, very much before our time." Authentic pieces of regional craftsmanship in silver gilt, the earrings were hinged in three parts of open-worked scrolls, large bosses, and tiny bosses set within circlets of coiled wire. The pendant of two hinged parts, a square piece set diagonally over a kite-shaped, was similar in workmanship to the three-part pendant, of open-worked scrolls, filigree leaves, and flowers and leaves of thin plate, which we afterwards found at Betanzos, La Coruña. It hung from a necklace of round beads made knobby with applied circlets of fine wire.

Señora D— persistently refused to appear as a bride again but was quite willing that her daughter should pose as one, provided that we promised not to reproduce her picture on commercial post cards. Dressed, the girl returned to us bashful in finery so highly charged with sentimental significance; she would probably wear it at her own wedding. Over her hair, plaited in one long braid, she had arranged a silken kerchief of bronze-green striped with white and black; its fresh, stiff folds lay obediently in place though the ends were but crossed, not tied. Under the cape, she had put on a rose cotton blouse and an embroidered yellow silk shawl of her own.

For the sake of the stronger light we decided to photograph out of doors under a leafless vine trellis beside the house. Here, we could see that at last we had a model cut to our cloth. The mother's garments fitted the daughter perfectly, the cape crossing easily in

