

THE FINAL SOLITUDE OF THE POET ANTONIO MACHADO

(Memories of his Brother, José)

(Part 8)

ABOUT HIS BIOGRAPHY

Many people have complained about the lack of information about the biography of Antonio, but it seems to me that when they say this they are ignoring the Poet's work. The biography is implicit in what Antonio himself has told us, since in this case, his persona and his work are indivisible.

Someone has said, and this is just common sense, that if you want to know Antonio, there is no better guide than Antonio himself. In fact, in his work he did not write his biography, which would make it similar to that of other writers, but there is something much better: his *autobiography*, which he gives us himself, little by little.

And now we will present a precise account of the events from his life.

MY LIFE

"I was born in Seville one night in June, 1875 in the Palacio de las Dueñas on the street of the same name.

My memories of the city of my birth are all from childhood since, when I was eight years old, my parents moved to Madrid where I went to school at the Free Institute of Learning. I still have a feeling of affection and profound gratitude for my teachers. My adolescence and my youth were spent in Madrid. I have traveled through parts of France and Spain. In 1907 I acquired the position of Teacher of French in Soria which I kept for five years. It was there that I was married, and it was there I lost my wife whose memory is always with me. I moved to Baeza where I am living now. My interests are reading and walking in the country. 1917.

I went from Madrid to Paris when I was twenty-four years old in 1899. Paris was still the city of the "Dreyfus Affair" in politics, of symbolism in poetry, impressionism in painting, and elegant skepticism in criticism. I met Oscar Wilde and Jean Moréas personally. The most important literary figure was the renowned Anatole France.

I went from Madrid to Paris in 1902. This time in Paris I met Ruben Dario.

From 1903 to 1910 I made several trips through Spain: Granada, Cordoba, the country around Soria, the source of the Duero, cities in Castile, Valencia, Aragon. From Soria to Paris in 1910. I attended a class of Henri Bergson at the College of France.

From 1912 to 1919 I traveled from Baeza to the source of the Guadalquivir and to almost all of the cities of Andalusia.

Since 1919 I spend approximately half my time in Segovia and the other half in Madrid. My most recent excursions have been to Avila, Leon, Palencia and Barcelona in 1928.”

(1931) To this we must add that when the war broke out in 1936 he was teaching his final classes at the newly created Calderon Institute in Madrid. The dates of 1917 and 1931 correspond, respectively, to the times that he wrote these biographical notes.

And this concludes the part devoted to the brief biographical account of Antonio.

IV

AT LOOSE ENDS

1936-1939

Madrid (November 1936)

And when it is time to make that final voyage...

The last house where the Poet lived in Madrid was located in the Chamberí neighborhood, General Arranda Street, No. 4. He occupied the second floor on the right. It said “second” on the sign by the stairway but, unfortunately, for those who had to make the climb, it felt like the fourth.

On this floor there were three rooms side by side. They were almost exactly the same size and each had a balcony that looked out over the street.

The vestibule was in the middle. On the right was a bathroom and on the left was the Poet’s room—his living room, office and bedroom. The house was rather cold because it faced the north. He lived in it from July, 1917 until November, 1936.

THE FURNISHINGS

The furnishings in his room were very plain. Opposite the only doorway was the large old work table which had belonged to our father. Above this he had hung a portrait (an enlarged photograph) of his wife, Leonor, and on the right and left side of this were two bookcases that were crammed with books. Next to the left wall was a simple bed with a steel frame, and at the foot of the bed was a wash table with a mirror. The right wall was almost completely taken up by the balcony. To the right side of the only door was a large, old armoire which was also completely full of books.

He kept our father's old work table so full of books and papers that it looked like one of those cluttered tables we have at times seen in paintings. Except that in this case it was even more cluttered. Because this wasn't imaginary disorder; it was the real thing. He couldn't even write on it so he had to use a little round table with a cloth around it which in winter gave the illusion of enclosing some the heat from a brazier.

In the summer the cloth was removed so that it served as a normal table. Facing it at all times was a large leather armchair.

On this little table was a stack of papers so completely surrounded by books that he had little space left to write. To one side of this was the aforementioned wastebasket which by morning was always filled with crumpled and torn sheets of paper.

Every night before he went to bed he always drank a cup of coffee—an absolute necessity—which of course took up more of the limited amount of space left on the table. Because of this, by the following day there were often more than a few sheets of paper which had the unmistakable sign of having soaked up their share of coffee.

These were the main points of the room I am trying to describe, but in order to make less work for some future investigator, I will also add that there was a night table and two chairs I forgot to mention.

Every Sunday our brother Manuel came to this room (during the rest of the week we met somewhere else) to meet with Antonio and exchange ideas about their work. And there, seated around that little table, were the three brothers. I do not exaggerate when I say that we had to remove, or at least reduce, the wall of books that kept us from being able to see each other's face once we were seated. And amid the cigarette smoke and the inevitable cups of coffee the two brothers talked about the plot of the play they were writing, and I would read them a copy of the acts they had already finished.

And that's the way it was until one Sunday when they said good-bye, without realizing it would be the last time in their life that Manuel and Antonio would ever see each other.

A few days later the war broke out.

THE WAR BEGINS

On the morning of July 18, 1936, we heard the first sound of artillery in the Cuartel de la Montaña of Madrid. It is the beginning of a struggle which has still not ended,¹ since the war in Spain was only the Prologue of the bloody disaster which would follow. Cannons of all sizes and calibers have continued to fire without ceasing all over the world.

¹ It must not be forgotten that this is written in 1940.

It is in Madrid, the heroic capital of Spain, where the first unselfish blood of our youth is spilled, blood that Cain has shed with the jawbone sharpened by hate.

The most inhumane and cruel war, the most bestial and pitiless war that has ever been waged against the freedom of mankind.

And the people of Madrid face it with the courage and the heroism which can only be compared, somewhat later, to that of people in Stalingrad. These are two peoples who have now become immortalized by history.

The terrifying and ferocious bombardments have begun to fill the days and nights of Madrid with horror and death, with anguish and fear.

By November the danger threatening the still undefeated Capital had reached the most terrible proportions.

It was then that two good friends Antonio greatly admired, the poets Leon Felipe and Rafael Alberti, came to see him and tried to convince him affectionately that he should leave Madrid.

At first he was adamantly opposed to the idea of leaving his beloved city; but what finally convinced him to leave was the moral imperative—we already know his kindness was as great as his intelligence—of the safety of his elderly mother, his brothers and their daughters, his nieces, whom he loved like a father.

The moment had arrived when he must make the sacrifice of tearing himself away from Madrid, the Madrid which had become so deeply embedded in his being.

His admiration for the memorable Capital was something that, before he left, he was able to express with these words so full of emotion:

.
The land is torn apart, the sky rumbles,
and you smile, with lead in your heart.

FROM MADRID TO VALENCIA

At two in the morning during the final days of November, 1936 the Poet left the house on General Aranda Street where he had lived for many years, accompanied by the family members who were traveling with him.

The first stop during the hours before the final departure from Madrid was at the site of the illustrious Fifth Regiment, where a farewell breakfast took place. The ones who attended were those who formed the different family groups that were about to make the long journey. All were friends and admirers.

Towards evening we all set out for Tarancon where we arrived in time to have a late supper, if you can call it that, before going to bed. Most of those who made the trip slept, or at least they tried to sleep, in a large unfurnished room on some mattresses which had been placed on the bare floor. There were several small, picturesque incidents which made it impossible to achieve that goal.

At dawn, even more tired than when we went to bed, we continued our journey without any great difficulties until we arrived at the beautiful Port of Contreras. There the motor of the vehicle in which we were traveling broke down and for the moment it was impossible to continue our journey. Fortunately, we were able to take advantage of private auto which was arriving from Utiel, a small nearby town, and which would return there with our mother and the Poet, both of whom had become weakened by the state of their health and the effects of the trip.

The rest of us had to wait until we could rejoin them in the aforementioned town, where we finally arrived on a small passenger bus.

We eventually set out again from Utiel in several vehicles which were able to carry us on the remaining part of our journey.

We arrived at the "House of Culture" in Valencia around one in the morning, thanks to the delay caused by the breakdown.

VALENCIA

We stayed overnight in the "House of Culture," but the entire experience had been so difficult for the Poet, who was afflicted by pain and the experience of being uprooted from his normal life, that he was beginning to reach a state of agitation and exhaustion which was really quite alarming.

ROCAFORT

Luckily, some good friends were able to provide us a place to stay at a country estate located in the beautiful area of Rocafort. It was a convenient location only twenty minutes by train from Valencia.

From the balconies of the large country house we were able to look out over the marvelous land around Valencia which was cultivated with such devotion by the people who lived there.

Climbing up in the tower that rose above the ground like a lookout, you could see a strip of ocean that was dotted with tiny boats in the distance. Sometimes a thin cloud of gray smoke stretched across the sky until it disappeared over the horizon, or at others it

became thicker and blacker as it got nearer. This happened when a passing steamship left behind a trail of smoke which was suspended in the air.

From this Valencian Tower the Poet can once again see oranges and lemons that remind him of his childhood. But this would be the last time he would see them. He is now in one of the final stages of his life.

Under the balustrade that stretched along one side of this “House of Good Hope,” as it was called, flowed the water of an irrigation ditch. Here once again was the water which had captured his attention since he was a child, and which had been so important throughout the length of his poetic work.

In this house he resumed his work with great intensity in spite of the cold that was felt during this time of the year. This was December of 1936, in a house primarily designed for spending the summer.

In the large dining room he spent every night at his work table where once again he was surrounded by books. Clad in his overcoat he was able to put up with the cold, writing until the break of dawn when he would open the window to look at the sunrise or, on other occasions, and in spite of the fact that he was no longer very agile, he would climb up to the top of the Tower so that he could look into the distance and see the sun rise over the edge of the sea.

On these long winter nights he worked assiduously while making an attempt to fulfill the endless number of requests that came from everywhere. Quite often he would have to put out the light during the dreadful bombing raids that erupted into the sky over the beautiful city of the Guadalaviar River. Shortly before that happened, above the rooftops of Rocafort was heard the noise from the engines of the planes which were about to make the savage attack on the defenseless city of Valencia. Afterward the sight of flames filled the dark blue of the night sky.

Immediately after the merciless bombing had ended, the Poet would continue his work undaunted. He worked like this almost every night, without stopping for anything.

His profile, seen from some distance in that large room, looked like that of a Saint who was immersed in his prayers.

There came a day when his overcoat was too large and he seemed even smaller. This was because he was shrinking with the cold and his body was wasting away, not so much with the passage of years—he was then sixty—as with the loss of physical energy. One should keep in mind that he was the tallest of all of the brothers, and that when he was young he cut a very fine figure.

But if his physical self had been weakened by the ravages of the sickness that were having such an effect on his body, his mind still continued to function with the same clarity and lucidity which he possessed until the final days of his life.

So he continued working without stop for approximately fifteen months there in that Valencian Tower in the town of Rocafort.

He contributed to the journal, "La hora de España," beginning with its first issue. He was often visited by admiring young people who were just as ready to write poems as they were to fire their rifles on the battlefield. He learned from them about the state of war; he only regretted that because of his precarious health he was not able to join them in the trenches.

In addition to many other works, he also collaborated in the articles that were published with the title "Madrid" by the "House of Culture" in Valencia.

Toward the end of this period he began a series of articles requested by the journal "La Vanguardia" in Barcelona. He put together a number of works to form a splendid book which was called *The War*, for which I also did the illustrations.

It was during this time that the great Russian Hispanist, Fedor Kelyn, visited him one afternoon on the large enclosed balcony which looked out over the countryside and was one of his favorite places of contemplation.

This renowned Russian writer who was so fond of Spain and its literature was, as I remember, a man who was very tall and very thin. His eyes gazed out through the lenses of his glasses casting a mystical glow.

As he was presented by a young Spaniard who accompanied him, the latter said: "I would like to introduce you to the best poet in Spain." "In the world," Kelyn insisted, as he bent over to kiss the Poet's hands with great devotion.

Another afternoon he was visited by an enthusiastic group of young people who asked him to write a poem for their Association. He responded by composing the magnificent hymn, "Be alert," which is a poem full of vibrant emotions. Many copies of it were made, and it also appeared in the literary supplement of the "Servicio Español" which at that time was published by the Ministry of Communication in Valencia. Unfortunately, this poem has been lost, but there is hope that some copies of it still exist and that they may be found some day.

On Sundays people would often come from Valencia to Rocafort to breathe the fragrant air of the beautiful pine groves found at some of the picturesque sites located near the town. Among them, one who never failed to visit the Poet and spend some time with him, was Luis A. Santullano, an old friend and admirer whose noble and generous friendship had always been offered during the most difficult times of his life. And he is still the best friend among all his acquaintances.

He was also visited by eminent painters like Javier Wenthuysen and Cristobal Ruiz, the one who painted those marvelous landscapes.

During this time he seldom went to Valencia. However, one occasion which was truly memorable was the afternoon when he spoke in the Plaza de Castelar from a small wooden stage which had just been constructed.

From behind this improvised stage the Poet climbed up slowly and with great difficulty; his figure emerged as though it were coming out of the trapdoor of some magical play.

I don't think that the author of *Solitude* had ever made a greater sacrifice. To find himself on a stage in the middle of a public plaza surrounded by a sea of faces raised up to see him and hear him speak was undoubtedly something extraordinary for him.

It could well be said that by his appearance here he was giving the only thing that he still could offer. His great good-will and, in this case, his great understanding made him accept being part of this spectacle without hesitation. Whenever it was something that others felt would be good for their cause, he was always willing to do it.

I think that this single fact would be as much reason as the work that he left us to make him worthy of our eternal gratitude. And even more so for a man who had written these words:

And how much is lost when one is present.

He seldom left the country house in Rocafort. Usually, when he went to Valencia it was to buy books. In these days he could no longer find the books he was looking for, and all he could get was a series of French novels by Pierre Loti. Although he already knew them all, he read them again with real enjoyment.

He used to talk about them with great admiration. He said that *Le Desert* was really worth the trip. He thought the description was truly magnificent.

Another time when he went to Valencia it was to attend the International Writers Congress which was being held there. And on another occasion he was invited to attend a banquet that the "House of Culture" gave for him and for Benavente. It turned out to be a simple dinner, but full of the warmest emotion; it could be said that with this the cycle of his journeys from Rocafort to Valencia was concluded. That was not surprising, since it was becoming more and more difficult for him to get around.

His state of mind was also weighed-down by all that was happening in the war, and he had no illusions about its outcome. The only thing that seemed to cheer him a little was the time he spent giving classes to his nieces; during the day he spent a great deal of time lying on his bed, reading, thinking and smoking without stop, while lost in himself. At other times he would go down to the garden and walk a little—very little—and then sit down immediately to contemplate nature, which he loved so much.

There he would write about:

the golden fruit; as I raise my hand,
the pure blue sky reflected in the fountain

and above all, the memory of his childhood in Seville:

My childhood in Seville, so familiar,
how time tries in vain to erase your memory!

And so the days pass by, between the memory of a past which had received the violent thrust of the war, a present which was more and more distressful, and a future that was even darker and more uncertain.

This was his state of mind when in April of 1938 the day arrived which would be the last one of this first stage of the sad journey he would have to make. That afternoon a telegram came in which he was told that he absolutely must leave Rocafort and that there would be an auto ready to take him during the early hours of the following day.

These are now the anxious moments of the war when he was forced to move from Valencia to Barcelona.

With all the urgency that the situation demanded, he gathered up his most important papers. There was no time to do more, and he had to leave behind many interesting books, journals and newspapers. I wonder what ever became of them?

LEAVING ROCAFORT

So indeed, the following morning he left Rocafort, accompanied by the members of his family.

We passed through Sagunto, which had been partly destroyed by the bombings, and we continued traveling toward Barcelona where Antonio would spend the final stage of his life in Spain.

As the afternoon ended, and in spite of the terrible way he was forced to make the trip and the deplorable state of his health, I saw that he was completely absorbed in his contemplation of the beautiful sunset.

It was one more sunset, but at that moment how heavily it seemed to weigh on his spirits. Because his life is now approaching the end.

Once the sun had set, we began to feel the cold, a precursor of the coming of night. Shadows now covered the road. Soon we were able to distinguish the distant lights of the city. Finally, Barcelona!

ARRIVAL IN BARCELONA

He first went to the Ministry of Public Instruction where he was received by the Undersecretary, Wenceslao Roces, who was always known to have the greatest esteem and respect for the Poet.

He suggested the Hotel Majestic as a temporary place to stay.

In this annoying hotel environment, so unpleasant for one who loved solitude, he was forced to spend a month. There, like in the middle of a train station, all kinds of people passed back and forth, some known, some unknown, some suspicious.

He would go down to the dining room only at mealtime, and sometimes he would remain there a little longer to have coffee when friends came to visit him. But most of the time he stayed in his rooms, thinking and working.

He was sometimes visited by the great poet Leon Felipe, with his very black beard that was filled with threads of white, and with even blacker eyes that contrasted with his red lips. This very good friend was no longer wearing the long overcoat he used to wear in Madrid which was bound so tightly at his waist that it looked like the habit of some Franciscan Friar.

Since the elevators were no longer working, he often walked with Antonio down the long stairways of the hotel, and they would sit on the sofas of the landings to continue talking.

One night as they were passing by, a door opened and a diabolical-looking woman appeared on the threshold with little rolls of paper on her head and (oh dear!) with the sparse hair she had left wrapped tightly around them. From that room, whose number I don't choose to remember, she imperiously ordered Leon Felipe, who was the one who had been speaking, to be quiet. But even though he was always very kind and showed exquisite politeness toward women, he was totally unfazed and continued talking. Then this woman, who looked like one of the Furies, slammed the door with such a loud bang that the poor people who were sleeping on that floor must have trembled in their beds, thinking that a bomb had hit the hotel.

Soon after that they went up to their respective rooms and retired for the night. And it was then, precisely, during the solitude of the night, when the Poet went back to work and continued until the wee hours of the morning.

While staying in this hotel he became personally acquainted with the renowned North American author, Waldo Frank, with whom he used to converse some nights during the short time that writer was in Barcelona. Years later, this man of letters wrote about the Poet in one of his books.

The disagreeable days of this month in the Hotel Majestic continued passing by as we were waiting to find some place which would be more suitable to his state of health, which was becoming more and more fragile.

Finally, since all things must eventually come to an end, some very good friends found him a house. This house was the old “Torre Castañer” belonging to the Duchess of Moragas, located on the Paseo de San Gervasio.

THE TORRE CASTAÑER

Large rooms. Salons with a great number of gold-framed mirrors, an old piano, cornucopias, lithographs that were yellowed by time, and magnificent chandeliers. The portrait of the Duchess in an enormous ornamental frame holding a glass that protected the painting done in pastel colors by the painter, Bejar. It showed her when she was young, wearing a diaphanous dress. In this large main room everything was corroded by time. By now time its real owners were the rats and the woodworms. The impression this old Tower gave was that everything was ready to crumble into dust.

This mansion had a chapel where, in more fortunate times, the Duchess and her family undoubtedly used to listen to mass. And for the less fortunate, in the lower part of this residence there was an old family burial chamber which was reached by a broad and torturous stairway.

Here the Poet was finally surrounded by long galleries and ample rooms in this old romantic dwelling. He could now see his sad image multiplied in the depths of the old mirrors on the walls. When he looks in them he is absorbed in the contemplation of a face that he hardly recognizes as his own. This was in the old parlor of this house that was illuminated on one side by the dim light of a shady garden. On the opposite side of this room toward the front of the house there was a door which opened onto a large terrace. When someone opened it, the first ray of light which entered struck one of the crystals hanging from the chandelier, casting a rainbow of colors over the marble of the old gilded table on which the faltering hands of the Poet were resting.

Yes, his lifelong desire had been fulfilled! Many times I heard him say that if he had ever possessed the means, the only luxury he would have wished for was a house with large rooms and a garden. And here it was, surrounded by a large abandoned park where the land was returning to its natural state, slowly erasing the intrusive garden.

The laughing song of the water—once again water—was heard just a few steps away in the little plaza just inside the gate to the old “garden without... a gardener” of another great poet.

Nature herself was coming to meet the Poet, offering him one of his favorite themes: water.

But this was all happening much too late. Now he could hardly walk, since he was, as he put it, overburdened by:

the pain of death that weighs on my heart.

He seldom walked in the park garden, and when he did, he was quite exhausted.

The rhythm of his life was slowing down, as was the war at that moment. Nevertheless, we were then in the first months of the summer of 1938.

He still was still writing ceaselessly for journals, newspapers and periodicals. He was still working on the series of articles he was writing for *La Vanguardia* of Barcelona in section called "Outlook for the War."

He also wrote for almost all the journals that were constantly published by the young combatants on the front lines. He revived the idea of heroic figures like Agustina of Aragon, Empecinado, Torrijos, etc. He undertook an endless stream of tasks that came from everywhere. In one of the newsletters, under a portrait of General Miaja drawn by me, he wrote a marvelous sonnet with his own hand which has now, unfortunately, been lost out there somewhere. He also collaborated with the literary supplement of the Spanish Information Service that was part of the Ministry of Communication. He kept up with everything. You could see him bent over his papers working incessantly, in spite of the fact that he was terribly sick at heart.

The only thing he regretted about this overwhelming work was the one-sided nature of the attitude towards the war. He felt that now everything which was said had to serve as a projectile whose only mission was to strike an enemy target by the shortest route possible.

It is easy to see how this distressful and exhausting task, which was so contrary to his normal rhythm of life, represented for him an enormous sacrifice. In spite of that, he never hesitated for a moment to make it.

During his entire life he was on the side of freedom and those who tried to defend it. He said that since Spain had been invaded by a foreign power, all Spaniards who are worthy of the name must unite to defend it. And to this he gave his utmost effort with the generosity of a heart which was always beating for others.

His clear vision of the future let him see that, after the unfortunate adoption of the celebrated policy of "non-intervention" in the war in Spain, there was absolutely no hope that Spain could win, when such a large part of Europe opposed it in such a despicable and deceitful manner.

Nevertheless, he never admitted to anyone, except to those closest to him, that he felt the war was inevitably lost. This sad conviction caused him great anguish, and although he never believed for a moment that the heroic efforts of those who were fighting were useless, and while he hoped that they would produce positive results at

some time in the distant future, he saw no hope for the present. Of course when a poet like him considers these things, it immediately makes him think of what *ought* to happen, and while thinking like that he did his best to overcome a pessimism which he wanted to avoid at all costs.

He also thought that France would soon enter the war, and it was certain to lose because it was already “a fruit that was too rotten.”

“On Warlike Germany” was the title he gave to an admirable article where in the final paragraph he wrote: “...because it will have taught the entire world the way to make war by using the most efficient method to exterminate peaceful men. Then, the rest of the world decided, ungratefully, to exterminate its teacher, when all it wanted was a decorous retirement.” This is the outcome he saw for Germany.

These accurate expectations should not be surprising in one who, many years ago in 1913, foresaw the Spanish Dictatorship of 1923, as well as the Spain which appeared in 1936—“a Spain full of rage and bold ideas”—as he describes it in the conclusion of his poem, “A Fleeting Tomorrow.”

WINTER

Summer was coming to an end. Days passed by and gradually became the gray, sad days of winter. The light receded and the mercury in the thermometer was slowly withdrawing to its winter position. The cold penetrated our bones.

There is no way to produce heat.

There is absolutely no hope of finding any coal for the only fireplace in the house!

The usual remedy of the brazier was also unavailable on this occasion. There was only... cold, nothing but cold.

Living conditions were becoming more and more difficult.

And as for food to eat, don't even think of it! If some very good friends had not been able obtain what was absolutely necessary from the “Socorro Rojo,” we would have reached a state of total starvation. But then, irony of ironies, on the walls of the large dining room there were paintings of magnificent platters with lobsters, ducks, turkeys, a boar's head, etc. All this was arranged with the most refined taste and painted with the most beautiful colors. It showed everything that painters could have imagined with their gastronomical desires. It was designed to stimulate the appetite of the most finicky eaters who are not really hungry.

There was also an ostentatious display of bowls filled with the richest and juiciest fruits with their brilliant and splendid colors.

It may be that in more luxurious times the dinner guests needed these incentives in order to eat. But in our time there was never a visitor who entered that artificial paradise without forgetting the purpose of his visit at the sight of that display of nature which was, alas, completely unreal.

Antonio smiled with a certain bitterness when he noticed that a lady who came to visit him was trying in vain to tear her eyes away from a marvelous and succulent turkey filled with truffles and surrounded by jelly. Only the explosion of an anti-aircraft gun was able to bring her back to the sad reality.

However, when visitors came to this Tower they were able to see a large chicken coop next to the front door that was full of real hens and chickens which, unfortunately, never made an appearance on our table.

To understand this strange situation, one must know that the custodian of this Tower was a young Catalan who drove around every day in a grand automobile on whose doors you could read the words: "Help Madrid and all the fronts."

He undoubtedly must have gotten the help he wanted for Madrid and the other fronts, since it resulted in the formation of a real chicken coop.

As for using money to pay for food, that would be useless unless you were as rich as Croesus, since having a *duro* in your pocket was like having a stone. Money was no longer good for anything.

At this time book editors had no hesitation in paying *generously* no matter how much you asked for. They would offer you a fortune, that is, as long as you were willing to turn over to them the absolute ownership rights. All that for a lot of useless money they knew no one would want, not under any circumstances.

About that time a large, popular edition of the poem "Alvargonzalez" was printed so it could be read on the front lines.

During those sad winter days, while the Poet was wrapped in his overcoat to protect himself against the increasing cold with hands that were almost frozen, he wrote his final compositions which were filled more than ever with the warmth of his heart. And so time continued to wear away the last link in the chain of his existence.

Never had he worked with more effort than in this time of so many sacrifices. But one never heard him complain. On the contrary; he was always concerned about everything and everybody.

Nevertheless, as a break in the course of his bitter existence, he did experience a few pleasant moments during his final days in Barcelona. He was visited on Sundays by the eminent philologist, Dr. Tomas Navarro, and the popular music teacher, Torner, came to revive the old piano in the salon of the Duchess with some interesting compositions.

He listened with great delight to the voice of a young woman who performed a medley of different popular songs. There was also a Catalan philosopher who came to these gatherings and played the music from some well-known Catalan dances with great fervor.

The Poet had always loved music and we saw him listen with great enthusiasm to the popular songs which the aforementioned young music teacher had gathered from many different regions of Spain.

Quite often these sessions were rudely interrupted. The electric lights wavered and, little by little, lost their clarity until they turned into a thread of light that was finally extinguished.

The large salon was then completely filled with darkness. In the distance we heard the sound of anti-aircraft guns and right after that the sky was filled with multiple bursts of light that came and went in the space above us. Only the old mirrors momentarily reflected the beams from the shifting flashes of light.

Feeling lost amid these shadows of death and thinking that at any moment the planes were going to drop their bombs as they passed over our heads, we held our breath and our hearts beat more rapidly than usual in these seconds that seemed like centuries. A moment later in the distance we heard muffled detonations and the walls of the old house shook, but not as much as those of us who were horrified thinking that in this very moment many people who, moments earlier, were full of life were now lying under fire and smoke, stones and dust, horribly mutilated!...

http://armandfbaker.com/biography_toc.html