I remained about three weeks in the prison of Madrid, and then left it. If I had possessed any pride, or harboured any rancour against the party who had consigned me to durance, the manner in which I was restored to liberty would no doubt have been highly gratifying to those evil passions; the government having acknowledged, by a document transmitted to Sir George, that I had been incarcerated on insufficient grounds, and that no stigma attached itself to me from the imprisonment I had undergone; at the same time agreeing to defray all the expenses to which I had been subjected throughout the progress of this affair.

It moreover expressed its willingness to dismiss the individual owing to whose information I had been first arrested, namely, the corchete or police officer who had visited me in my apartments in the Calle de Santiago, and behaved himself in the manner which I have described in a former chapter. I declined, however, to avail myself of this condescension of the government, more especially as I was informed that the individual in question had a wife and family, who, if he were disgraced, would be at once reduced to want. I moreover considered that, in what he had done and said, he had probably only obeyed some private orders which he had received; I therefore freely forgave him, and if he does not retain his situation at the present moment, it is certainly no fault of mine.

I likewise refused to accept any compensation for my expenses, which were considerable. It is probable that many persons in my situation would have acted very differently in this respect, and I am far from saying that herein I acted discreetly or laudably; but I was averse to receive money from people such as those of which the Spanish government was composed, people whom I confess I heartily despised, and I was unwilling to afford them an opportunity of saying that after they had imprisoned an Englishman unjustly, and without a cause, he condescended to receive money at their hands. In a word, I confess my own weakness; I was willing that they should continue my debtors, and have little doubt that they had not the slightest objection to remain so; they kept their money, and probably laughed in their sleeves at my want of common sense.

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1 In reality, Borrow’s imprisonment lasted less than 11 days, from May 1 to 12 [Fraser, Sleeping, 37-39].

2 These expenses came down to a rather hefty 940 reales [Missler, Daring Game, 176]. Borrow wrote to Hitchin on 9 July 1838: ‘As to prison expenses, I must observe that the Government after placing me at liberty offered to indemnify me for all the expense I had incurred in prison, but I refused to accept their offer; should, however, the Committee think that I ought to have done so, they will deduct the amount’ [Darlow, 331].
Once, during my confinement, [Chaleco of Valdepeñas] called at the house, and being informed of my mishap, drew his sword, and vowed with horrible imprecactions to murder the prime minister of Ofalia, for having dared to imprison his brother. On my release, I did not revisit my lodgings for some days, but lived at an hotel. I returned late one afternoon, with my servant Francisco, a Basque of Hernani, who had served me with the utmost fidelity during my imprisonment, which he had voluntarily shared with me. The first person I saw on entering was the Gypsy soldier, seated by the table, whereon were several bottles of wine which he had ordered from the tavern, of course on my account. He was smoking, and looked savage and sullen; perhaps he was not much pleased with the reception he had experienced. He had forced himself in, and the woman of the house sat in a corner looking upon him with dread. I addressed him, but he would scarcely return an answer. At last he commenced discoursing with great volubility in Gypsy and Latin. I did not understand much of what he said. His words were wild and incoherent, but he repeatedly threatened some person. The last bottle was now exhausted: he demanded more. I told him in a gentle manner that he had drunk enough. He looked on the ground for some time, then slowly, and somewhat hesitatingly, drew his sword and laid it on the table. It was become dark. I was not afraid of the fellow, but I wished to avoid anything unpleasant. I called to Francisco to bring lights, and obeying a sign which I made him, he sat down at the table. The Gypsy glared fiercely upon him - Francisco laughed, and began with great glee to talk in Basque, of which the Gypsy understood not a word. The Basques, like all Tartars, and such they are, are paragons of fidelity and good nature; they are only dangerous when outraged, when they are terrible indeed. Francisco, to the strength of a giant joined the disposition of a lamb. He was beloved even in the patio of the prison, where he used to pitch the bar and wrestle with the murderers and felons, always coming off victor. He continued speaking Basque. The Gypsy was incensed; and, forgetting the languages in which, for the last hour, he had been speaking, complained to Francisco of his rudeness in speaking any tongue but Castilian. The Basque replied by a loud carcajada, and slightly touched the Gypsy on the knee. The latter sprang up like a mine discharged, seized his sword, and, retreating a few steps, made a desperate lunge at Francisco.

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3 For this most unlikely theory of Borrow’s, see chapter 37 above, especially footnote 20.
The Basques, next to the Pasiegos\textsuperscript{4}, are the best cudgel-players in Spain, and in the world. Francisco held in his hand part of a broomstick, which he had broken in the stable, whence he had just ascended. With the swiftness of lightning he foiled the stroke of Chaleco, and, in another moment, with a dexterous blow, struck the sword out of his hand, sending it ringing against the wall.

The Gypsy resumed his seat and his cigar. He occasionally looked at the Basque. His glances were at first atrocious, but presently changed their expression, and appeared to me to become prying and eagerly curious. He at last arose, picked up his sword, sheathed it, and walked slowly to the door; when there he stopped, turned round, advanced close to Francisco, and looked him steadfastly in the face. 'My good fellow,' said he, 'I am a Gypsy, and can read baji.\textsuperscript{5} Do you know where you will be at this time to-morrow?' Then, laughing like a hyena, he departed, and I never saw him again.

At that time on the morrow, Francisco was on his death-bed. He had caught the jail-fever, which had long raged in the Carcel de la Corte, where I was imprisoned. In a few days he was buried, a mass of corruption, in the Campo Santo of Madrid.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{[Chapter 42 continued]}

The heaviest loss which resulted from my confinement, and for which no indemnification could be either offered or received, was in the death of my affectionate and faithful Basque Francisco, who having attended me during the whole time of my imprisonment, caught the pestilential typhus or gaol fever, which was then raging in the Carcel de la Corte, of which he expired within a few days subsequent to my liberation. His death occurred late one evening; the next morning as I was lying in bed ruminating on my loss, and wondering of what nation my next servant would be, I heard a noise which seemed to be that of a person employed vigorously in cleaning boots or shoes, and at intervals a strange discordant voice singing snatches of a song in some unknown language: wondering who it could be, I rang the bell.

\textsuperscript{4} Inhabitant of the Cantabrian Valley of Pas and it surroundings. Borrow was familiar with them, probably because he passed through their area on his way back from Santander to Madrid in October 1837 (see chapter 35 above). Thus he writes in note 52 to \textit{The Zincali}: ‘A small nation or rather sect of contrabandistas, who inhabit the valley of Pas amidst the mountains of Santander; they carry long sticks, in the handling of which they are unequalled. Armed with one of these sticks, a smuggler of Pas has been known to beat off two mounted dragoons.’ Pasiego women, meanwhile, served as the most popular wetnurses of Madrid at the time.

\textsuperscript{5} Read fortune

\textsuperscript{6} In his letter to Brandram of 25 May 1838, Borrow writes: ‘My poor servant, a Basque from Hernani, is, I am afraid, dying of the jail-fever, which he caught in prison whilst attending me. He has communicated this horrible disorder to two other persons’ [Darlow, 320] On 14 June, he added in another letter: ‘My poor servant is dead. He died of the pestilential typhus caught in the prison; his body at the period of his death was a frightful mass of putridity, and was in consequence obliged to be instantly shovelled into the Campo Santo or common field of the dead near Madrid. May Christ be his stay at the Great Day; a more affectionate creature never breathed’ [Darlow, 324].
"Did you ring, mon maitre," said Antonio, appearing at the door with one of his arms deeply buried in a boot.

"I certainly did ring," said I, "but I scarcely expected that you would have answered the summons."

"MAIS POURQUOI NON, MON MAITRE?" cried Antonio. "Who should serve you now but myself? N'EST PAS QUE LE SIEUR FRANCOIS EST MORT? And did I not say, as soon as I heard of his departure, I shall return to my functions CHEZ MON MAITRE, Monsieur Georges?"

"I suppose you had no other employment, and on that account you came."

"AU CONTRAIRE, MON MAITRE," replied the Greek, "I had just engaged myself at the house of the Duke of Frias, from whom I was to receive ten dollars per month more than I shall accept from your worship; but on hearing that you were without a domestic, I forthwith told the Duke, though it was late at night, that he would not suit me, and here I am."

"I shall not receive you in this manner," said I; "return to the Duke, apologize for your behaviour, request your dismission in a regular way; and then if his grace is willing to part with you, as will most probably be the case, I shall be happy to avail myself of your services."

It is reasonable to expect that after having been subjected to an imprisonment which my enemies themselves admitted to be unjust, I should in future experience more liberal treatment at their hands than that which they had hitherto adopted towards me. The sole object of my ambition at this time was to procure toleration for the sale of the Gospel in this unhappy and distracted kingdom, and to have attained this end I would not only have consented to twenty such imprisonments in succession, as that which I had undergone, but would gladly have sacrificed life itself. I soon perceived, however, that I was likely to gain nothing by my incarceration; on the contrary, I had become an object of personal dislike to the government since the termination of this affair, which it was probable I had never been before; their pride and vanity were humbled by the concessions which they had been obliged to make in order to avoid a rupture with England. This dislike they were now determined to gratify, by thwarting my views as much as possible. I had an interview with Ofalia on the subject uppermost in my mind: I found him morose and snappish. "It will be for your interest to be still," said he; "beware! you have already thrown the whole corte into confusion; beware, I repeat; another time you may not escape so easily." "Perhaps not," I replied, "and perhaps I do not wish it; it is a pleasant thing to be persecuted for the Gospel's sake. I now take the liberty of inquiring whether, if I attempt to circulate the word of God, I am to be interrupted." "Of course," exclaimed Ofalia; "the church forbids such circulation." "I shall make the attempt, however," I exclaimed. "Do you mean what you say?"

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7 Bernardino Fernandez, 14th Duke of Frias (1783-1851) was a playwright, former Spanish Ambassador to London in the early 1820s and future Prime Minister of Spain from late 1838 onward. Ford notes how the good Duke actually prided himself in possessing all three essentials of a true Spanish grande, namely to be chico, endeudado y cornudo, i.e. little, indebted and cuckolded. The Duke must have has a sense of humour [Robertson, Ford, 58 note 28].

8 I.e. 200 reales, a small fortune for one who made some 12 reales a day, plus room and board, as Antonio did. [See chapter 19 above; and Missler, Daring Game, 168.]
demanded Ofalia, arching his eyebrows and elongating his mouth. "Yes," I continued, "I shall make the attempt in every village in Spain to which I can penetrate."  

Throughout my residence in Spain the clergy were the party from which I experienced the strongest opposition; and it was at their instigation that the government originally adopted those measures which prevented any extensive circulation of the sacred volume through the land. I shall not detain the course of my narrative with reflections as to the state of a church, which, though it pretends to be founded on Scripture, would yet keep the light of Scripture from all mankind, if possible.  

But Rome is fully aware that she is not a Christian church, and having no desire to become so, she acts prudently in keeping from the eyes of her followers the page which would reveal to them the truths of Christianity. Her agents and minions throughout Spain exerted themselves to the utmost to render my humble labours abortive, and to vilify the work which I was attempting to disseminate. All the ignorant and fanatical clergy (the great majority) were opposed to it, and all those who were anxious to keep on good terms with the court of Rome were loud in their cry against it. There was, however, one section of the clergy, a small one, it is true, rather favourably disposed towards the circulation of the Gospel though by no means inclined to make any particular sacrifice for the accomplishment of such an end: these were such as professed liberalism, which is supposed to mean a disposition to adopt any reform both in civil and church matters, which may be deemed conducive to the weal of the country. Not a few amongst the Spanish clergy were supporters of this principle, or at least declared themselves so, some doubtful for their own advancement, hoping to turn the spirit of the times to their own personal profit; others, it is to be hoped, from conviction, and a pure love of the principle itself. Amongst these were to

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9 This interview took place some time between 13 and 17 May 1838 [Darlow, 306], mainly on the prompting of the British Ambassador, who - confronted by Count Ofalia with the scandalous tracts distributed by Lieutenant Graydon in Malaga - was trying to mend things as best he could so as to avoid further diplomatic disruption. The meeting lasted about two hours, during which Ofalia was much more outgoing than in this here version, witness Borrow’s description in his letter to Brandram of 17 May 1838: ‘Now to pleasanter subjects. Count Ofalia has given me very excellent advice, which it will be well if the Society permit me to follow. Amongst other things he said: “Be very cautious for some time, and even suspend the sale of the Gospel in Madrid, and devote all your energies to make friends amongst the clergy, very many of whom are disposed to favour your enterprise. It would not be prudent at present for the Government to interfere with ecclesiastical matters, as the war is not yet terminated, but much can be done in a quiet way by yourself”’ [Darlow, 309f]. Between writing this latter statement and writing *The Bible in Spain*, however, the Ofalia government took radical steps to cull Borrow’s mission; hence the more hostile description of the interview in the present chapter. In fact, *two days after Borrow wrote this enthusiastic report*, Ofalia formally informed Villiers that the cabinet had decided to forbid all sales, imports and printing of unauthorised evangelical material in the vernacular tongues of Spain; which was the beginning of the end of Borrow’s Spanish undertaking [Jenkins, 254].

10 This statement is conveniently exaggerated. Spanish law did allow publication of vernacular Scripture, but only if the text included the lengthy explicatory notes which the Catholic Church demanded so as to ‘fulfil our religious principle of not permitting to private reason the interpretation of the Sacred Word’ [Jenkins, 251]. Catholics argued rather reasonably that ‘the notes are no obstacle’ to reading; but the Bible Society objected to any such addition to the pure, undiluted sacred text. The two positions were, therefore, fully incompatible, and – in the absence of a bit of common sense from both sides – conflict was inevitable.
be found, at the time of which I am speaking, several bishops. It is worthy of remark, however, that of all these not one but owed his office, not to the Pope, who disowned them one and all, but to the Queen Regent, the professed head of liberalism throughout all Spain. It is not, therefore, surprising that men thus circumstanced should feel rather disposed than not to countenance any measure or scheme at all calculated to favour the advancement of liberalism; and surely such a one was a circulation of the Scriptures. I derived but little assistance from their good will, however, supposing that they entertained some, as they never took any decided stand nor lifted up their voices in a bold and positive manner, denouncing the conduct of those who would withhold the light of Scripture from the world. At one time I hoped by their instrumentality to accomplish much in Spain in the Gospel cause; but I was soon undeceived, and became convinced that reliance on what they would effect, was like placing the hand on a staff of reed which will only lacerate the flesh. More than once some of them sent messages to me, expressive of their esteem, and assuring me how much the cause of the Gospel was dear to their hearts. I even received an intimation that a visit from me would be agreeable to the Archbishop of Toledo, the Primate of Spain.

[From: letter to Brandram of 11 May 1838 from Madrid jail, in: Darlow, 302]

I will now state a fact which speaks volumes as to the state of affairs at Madrid. My archenemy the Archbishop of Toledo, the Primate of Spain, wishes to give me the kiss of brotherly peace. He has caused a message to be conveyed to me in my dungeon, assuring me that he has had no share in causing my imprisonment, which he says was the work of the Civil Governor, who was incited to that step by the Jesuits. He adds that he is determined to seek out my persecutors amongst the clergy and to have them punished, and that when I leave prison he shall be happy to cooperate with me in the dissemination of the Gospel!!!

42.2 Bishop Pedro González Vallejo by Lopez Portaño

11 Isaiah 36 : 6: ‘Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him’. The exact same phrase is repeated in II Kings 18 : 21.
Of this personage I can say but little, his early history being entirely unknown to me. At the death of Ferdinand, I believe, he was Bishop of Mallorca, a small insignificant see, of very scanty revenues, which perhaps he had no objection to exchange for one more wealthy; it is probable, however, that had he proved a devoted servant of the Pope, and consequently a supporter of legitimacy, he would have continued to the day of his death to fill the episcopal chair of Mallorca; but he was said to be a liberal, and the Queen Regent thought fit to bestow upon him the dignity of Archbishop of Toledo, by which he became the head of the Spanish church. The Pope, it is true, had refused to ratify the nomination, on which account all good Catholics were still bound to consider him as Bishop of Mallorca, and not as Primate of Spain. He however received the revenues belonging to the see, which, though only a shadow of what they originally were, were still considerable, and lived in the primate's palace at Madrid, so that if he were not archbishop DE JURE, he was what many people would have considered much better, archbishop DE FACTO.  

Hearing that this personage was a personal friend of Ofalia, who was said to entertain a very high regard for him, I determined upon paying him a visit, and accordingly one morning betook myself to the palace in which he resided. I experienced no difficulty in obtaining an interview, being forthwith conducted to his presence by a common kind of footman, an Asturian, I believe, whom I found seated on a stone bench in the entrance hall. When I was introduced the Archbishop was alone, seated behind a table in a large apartment, a kind of drawing-room; he was plainly dressed, in a black cassock and silken cap; on his finger, however, glittered a superb amethyst, the lustre of which was truly dazzling. He rose for a moment as I advanced, and motioned me to a chair with his hand. He might be about sixty years of age; his figure was very tall, but he stooped considerably, evidently from feebleness, and the pallid hue of ill health overspread his emaciated features. When he had reseated himself, he dropped his head, and appeared to be looking on the table before him.

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12 The bishop was a government appointee of liberal sympathies, so that the Vatican, which sided with the Pretender Don Carlos, refused to recognize him as Primate of Spain. Consequently, in formal lists the archiepiscopal see of Toledo is noted as vacant from 1836 to 1847. The archbishop-elect in question was not the then bishop of Mallorca, Antonio Pérez de Hirias (as Burke, footnote to 583, thought) but Pedro González Vallejo, bishop of Mallorca up to 1825, a prelate of such liberal opinions that he was made Senator by the crown. After the death of the previous archbishop of Toledo in February 1836, and the Vatican’s refusal to accept him, Gonzalez Vallejo was appointed ‘Gobernador Ecclesiastico’ – ‘Church Governor’ – of the See, so he could function as caretaker archbishop. The Toledo Chapter hated him with a vengeance, and he is still known as an ‘intruder’. He visited Toledo from time to time, but invariably resided in Madrid. [Pedro Ortiz Armengol, Proceedings of the 1993 George Borrow Conference, Toronto 1994, 22 & 28; Guia de forasteros en Madrid para el año 1840, page 82.]

13 According to a note of Borrow’s to Brandram of the same date [Darlow, 314], the interview took place on 23 May. In reality Borrow was not invited explicitly, nor did he present himself impromptu. In his letter to Brandram of 17 May 1838 he explains: ‘I have commissioned one of the Bishops to request for me an interview with the Archbishop of Toledo. Sir George on hearing this said: “Tell the Archbishop that I also am anxious for the favour of an interview, in order that I may assist in clearing up any doubt, (...) respecting the intentions of the Bible Society; he has only to state the day, and I will wait upon him”’ [Darlow, 311].
"I suppose your lordship knows who I am?" said I, at last breaking silence. The Archbishop bent his head towards the right shoulder, in a somewhat equivocal manner, but said nothing. "I am he whom the Manolos of Madrid call Don Jorgito el Ingles14; I am just come out of prison, whither I was sent for circulating my Lord's Gospel in this kingdom of Spain?"

The Archbishop made the same equivocal motion with his head, but still said nothing. "I was informed that your lordship was desirous of seeing me, and on that account I have paid you this visit."

"I did not send for you," said the Archbishop, suddenly raising his head with a startled look. "Perhaps not: I was, however, given to understand that my presence would be agreeable; but as that does not seem to be the case, I will leave."

"Since you are come, I am very glad to see you." "I am very glad to hear it," said I, reseating myself; "and since I am here, we may as well talk of an all-important matter, the circulation of the Scripture. Does your lordship see any way by which an end so desirable might be brought about?"

"No," said the Archbishop faintly. "Does not your lordship think that a knowledge of the Scripture would work inestimable benefit in these realms?"

"I don't know." "Is it probable that the government may be induced to consent to the circulation?"

"How should I know?" and the Archbishop looked me in the face. I looked in the face of the Archbishop; there was an expression of helplessness in it, which almost amounted to dotage. "Dear me," thought I, "whom have I come to on an errand like mine? Poor man, you are not fitted to play the part of Martin Luther, and least of all in Spain. I wonder why your friends selected you to be Archbishop of Toledo; they thought perhaps that you would do neither good nor harm, and made choice of you, as they sometimes do primates in my own country, for your incapacity. You do not seem very happy in your present situation; no very easy stall this of yours. You were more comfortable, I trow, when you were the poor Bishop of Mallorca; could enjoy your puchera then without fear that the salt would turn out sublimate. No fear then of being smothered in your bed. A siesta is a pleasant thing when one is not subject to be disturbed by 'the sudden fear.' I wonder whether they have poisoned you already," I continued, half aloud, as I kept my eyes fixed on his countenance, which methought was becoming ghastly.

14 We have to take Borrow's word for it that the Madrid dandies called him so. 'Jorgito', which means 'little George', would be a surprisingly jocular nickname for a man who stood 1 m 90 in his stockings. Since this is the only 'evidence' we have that the people of Madrid so addressed him, it is not unthinkable that Borrow made it up, perhaps finding inspiration in the nickname of another famous Bible peddler from early 16th century Seville, who was burned on the Inquisition's pyre for his efforts, known as Julianillo or Julio le Petit [Menendez Pelayo, Heterodoxos, 75-81 and footnote 26 & 27 to those pages].
"Did you speak, Don Jorge?" demanded the Archbishop.

"That is a fine brilliant on your lordship's hand," said I.

"You are fond of brilliants, Don Jorge," said the Archbishop, his features brightening up; "vaya! so am I; they are pretty things. Do you understand them?"

"I do," said I, "and I never saw a finer brilliant than your own, one excepted; it belonged to an acquaintance of mine, a Tartar Khan. He did not bear it on his finger, however; it stood in the frontlet of his horse, where it shone like a star. He called it Daoud Scharr, which, being interpreted, meaneth LIGHT OF WAR.\textsuperscript{15}

"Vaya!" said the Archbishop. "how very extraordinary; I am glad you are fond of brilliants, Don Jorge. Speaking of horses, reminds me that I have frequently seen you on horseback. Vaya! how you ride; it is dangerous to be in your way."

"Is your lordship fond of equestrian exercise?"

"By no means, Don Jorge; I do not like horses; it is not the practice of the church to ride on horseback. We prefer mules: they are the quieter animals; I fear horses, they kick so violently."

"The kick of a horse is death," said I, "if it touches a vital part. I am not, however, of your lordship's opinion with respect to mules: a good ginete may retain his seat on a horse however vicious, but a mule - vaya! when a false mule TIRA POR DETRAS\textsuperscript{16}, I do not believe that the Father of the Church himself could keep the saddle a moment, however sharp his bit."

As I was going away, I said, "And with respect to the Gospel, your lordship; what am I to understand?"

"No sé,"\textsuperscript{17} said the Archbishop, again bending his head towards the right shoulder, whilst his features resumed their former vacant expression. And thus terminated my interview with the Archbishop of Toledo\textsuperscript{18}.

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\textsuperscript{15} Burke [Glossary]: Arabic. \textit{Daoud Scharr} = \textit{dau ash-sharr}, light of mischief. There is no evidence that Borrow ever knew such a Tartar Khan, although they may have met in Russia.

\textsuperscript{16} Burke [Glossary]: to kick out behind.

\textsuperscript{17} ‘I do not know’, or in this context perhaps better: ‘Beats me!’

\textsuperscript{18} This version of the interview, in which the archbishop-elect of Toledo appears like a scared, doting old stool pigeon afraid of his own shadow and at the beg and call of sinister puppeteers, Borrow wrote for later home consumption by evangelical readers. A truer version – which paints the prelate in a fairer light – may be found in his letter to Brandram of 25 May 1838 [Darlow, 318ff], where he writes ‘I have had, as you are aware, an interview with the Archbishop of Toledo. I have not time to state particulars, but he said amongst other things, “Be prudent, the Government are disposed to arrange matters amicably, and I am disposed to cooperate with them.” At parting he shook me most kindly by the hand, saying that he liked me. Sir George intends to visit him in a few days. He is an old, venerable-looking man, between seventy and eighty. When I saw him, he was dressed with the utmost simplicity, with the exception of a most splendid amethyst ring, the lustre of which was truly dazzling.’ Until many months later, Borrow still considered the archbishop-elect a possible ally in the biblical cause. In his \textit{Account of the Proceedings} of October 1838 he even wrote: ‘If it be here asked who are the respectable and influential persons who are at the head of this undertaking [of making the Word of God, without note or comment, known amongst the children of Spain] and who patronise it, I reply the Archbishop of Toledo, the Primate of Spain, and the Bishops of Vich and Jaen’ [Darlow, 373].
"It appears to me," said I to Maria Diaz, on returning home; "it appears to me, Marequita mia, that if the Gospel in Spain is to wait for toleration until these liberal bishops and archbishops come forward boldly in its behalf, it will have to tarry a considerable time."

"I am much of your worship's opinion," answered Maria; "a fine thing, truly, it would be to wait till they exerted themselves in its behalf. Ca! the idea makes me smile: was your worship ever innocent enough to suppose that they cared one tittle about the Gospel or its cause? Vaya! they are true priests, and had only self-interest in view in their advances to you. The Holy Father disowns them, and they would now fain, by awaking his fears and jealousy, bring him to some terms; but let him once acknowledge them and see whether they would admit you to their palaces or hold any intercourse with you: 'Forth with the fellow,' they would say; 'vaya! is he not a Lutheran? Is he not an enemy to the Church? A LA HORCA, A LA HORCA!' I know this family better than you do, Don Jorge."

"It is useless tarrying," said I; "nothing, however, can be done in Madrid. I cannot sell the work at the despacho, and I have just received intelligence that all the copies exposed for sale in the libraries in the different parts of Spain which I visited, have been sequestrated by order of the government. My resolution is taken: I shall mount my

19 ‘To the gallows!!’

20 After the diplomatic clash, and the definite Prohibition of the Scio New Testament on 19 May 1838, Borrow closed the Despacho on the insistence of Ambassador Villiers. The books were removed to a safe place and the furniture eventually sold off. A year later, on 24 May 1839, Maria Diaz, as caretaker of affairs in Madrid, notified Borrow that Pepe Calzado – the Gallego who had been in charge of the bookshop (see chapter 36 above) - wanted to buy the precious chandeliers, so as to illuminate a new beer-shop he planned to open [Jenkins, 299].

21 Borrow heard of these seizures from Villiers, who had been informed of them in an official note from Ofalia [Darlow 343f]. In his letter of 27 July 1838 to Brandram [Darlow, 342] he enumerated these places as: Oviedo, Pontevedra, Salamanca, Santiago, Seville, and Valladolid, i.e. most of the deposits with booksellers for which Borrow had worked so hard and travelled so far. For the way in which these confiscations took place, see the case of Santiago, described in Missler, ‘Rey Romero’s Testaments’, in: GBB 28, 27-29 and Missler, Daring Game, 70-74.
horses, which are neighing in the stable, and betake myself to the villages and plains of dusty Spain. AL CAMPO, AL CAMPO: 'Ride forth because of the word of righteousness, and thy right hand shall show thee terrible things.' I will ride forth, Maria."

"Your worship can do no better; and allow me here to tell you, that for every single book you might sell in a despacho in the city, you may dispose of one hundred amongst the villages, always provided you offer them cheap: for in the country money is rather scant. Vaya! should I not know? am I not a villager myself, a villana from the Sagra? Ride forth, therefore; your horses are neighing in the stall, as your worship says, and you might almost have added that the Señor Antonio is neighing in the house. He says he has nothing to do, on which account he is once more dissatisfied and unsettled. He finds fault with everything, but more particularly with myself. This morning I saluted him, and he made me no reply, but twisted his mouth in a manner very uncommon in this land of Spain."

"A thought strikes me," said I; "you have mentioned the Sagra; why should not I commence my labours amongst the villages of that district?"

"Your worship can do no better," replied Maria; "the harvest is just over there, and you will find the people comparatively unemployed, with leisure to attend and listen to you; and if you follow my advice, you will establish yourself at Villa Seca, in the house of my fathers, where at present lives my lord and husband. Go, therefore, to Villa Seca in the first place, and from thence you can sally forth with the Señor Antonio upon your excursions. Peradventure, my husband will accompany you; and if so, you will find him highly useful. The people of Villa Seca are civil and courteous, your worship; when they address a foreigner they speak to him at the top of their voice and in Gallegan."

"In Gallegan!" I exclaimed.

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22 Psalm 45:5, ‘Ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness’.

23 Borrow’s decision to travel to the Sagra was less impulsive, and far more calculated, than he here admits. It originated in June [Darlow, 325 & 329] and his motives were purely personal. His sometimes rash actions and defiant attitudes during the crisis which led to his imprisonment, and the prohibition of his books, had considerably hurt his standing with his employers, who always preferred meekness to crusader zeal in their agents. In the heat of the argument, the Rev Brandram had unfavourably compared Borrow’s sales figures and distribution with those of Lieutenant James Graydon, the Bible Society agent on the Levantine coast, whom Borrow blamed for provoking the Catholic authorities into punitive action. Graydon’s success was, however, based on selling books for extremely low prices, while Borrow had kept rigorously to Bible Society policy of charging a fair price (usually 10 reales) so as not to demean the value of the books. Borrow understood that, in order to keep his job, he would have to enhance his shaky reputation with the Bible Society Committee before returning home ‘for consultations’. So he decided to make a major sales effort in the Sagra selling books for 4, 3 or even 2 reales each to the local peasantry [Missler, ‘The Case of the Underpriced Testaments’, in: GBB 29, 17-31; and Missler, Daring Game, 14-17].
"They all understand a few words of Gallegan, which they have acquired from the mountaineers, who occasionally assist them in cutting the harvest, and as Gallegan is the only foreign language they know, they deem it but polite to address a foreigner in that tongue. Vaya! it is not a bad village, that of Villa Seca, nor are the people; the only ill-conditioned person living there is his reverence the curate."

I was not long in making preparations for my enterprise. A considerable stock of Testaments were sent forward by an arriero, I myself followed the next day. Before my departure, however, I received a visit from Benedict Mol.

"I am come to bid you farewell, lieber herr; I return to Compostella."

"On what errand?"

"To dig up the schatz, lieber herr. For what else should I go? For what have I lived until now, but that I may dig up the schatz in the end?"

"You might have lived for something better," I exclaimed. "I wish you success, however. But on what grounds do you hope? Have you obtained permission to dig? Surely you remember your former trials in Galicia?"

"I have not forgotten them, lieber herr, nor the journey to Oviedo, nor 'the seven acorns,' nor the fight with death in the barranco. But I must accomplish my destiny. I go now to Galicia, as is becoming a Swiss, at the expense of the government, with coach and mule, I mean in the galera. I am to have all the help I require, so that I can dig down to the earth's centre if I think fit. I - but I must not tell your worship, for I am sworn on 'the four Evangiles' not to tell."

"Well, Benedict, I have nothing to say, save that I hope you will succeed in your digging."

"Thank you, lieber herr, thank you; and now farewell. Succeed! I shall succeed!" Here he stopped short, started, and looking upon me with an expression of countenance almost wild, he exclaimed: "Heiliger Gott! I forgot one thing. Suppose I should not find the treasure after all."

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24 The stock consisted of 200 New Testaments, and Borrow left Madrid for his first excursion to Vila Seca on 10 July 1838 [Darlow, 331].

25 The Galera was a heavy, unwieldy, 4-wheel stagecoach without springs, drawn by 10 to 12 mules, covered with linen above and with matting on the sides, which took approximate 12 days to snail from Madrid to Coruña. The luggage of passengers was stowed in a large net on the inside; some matrasses were laid over this, and the passengers took place on top. The Galera was just about the only stage coach that ran between Madrid and Coruña in the 1830s [Gonzalez Lopez, Reinado, 382], since the roads were simply too bad, and far too bandit-ridden and dangerous, for the fast, modern Diligencias.
"Very rationally said; pity, though, that you did not think of that contingency till now. I tell you, my friend, that you have engaged in a most desperate undertaking. It is true that you may find a treasure. The chances are, however, a hundred to one that you do not, and in that event, what will be your situation? You will be looked upon as an impostor, and the consequences may be horrible to you. Remember where you are, and amongst whom you are. The Spaniards are a credulous people, but let them once suspect that they have been imposed upon, and above all laughed at, and their thirst for vengeance knows no limit. Think not that your innocence will avail you. That you are no impostor I feel convinced; but they would never believe it. It is not too late. Return your fine clothes and magic rattan to those from whom you had them. Put on your old garments, grasp your ragged staff, and come with me to the Sagra, to assist in circulating the illustrious Gospel amongst the rustics on the Tagus' bank."

Benedict mused for a moment, then shaking his head, he cried, "No, no, I must accomplish my destiny. The schatz is not yet dug up. So said the voice in the barranco. To-morrow to Compostella. I shall find it - the schatz - it is still there - it MUST be there."
He went, and I never saw him more. What I heard, however, was extraordinary enough. It appeared that the government had listened to his tale, and had been so struck with Bennet's exaggerated description of the buried treasure, that they imagined that, by a little trouble and outlay, gold and diamonds might be dug up at Saint James sufficient to enrich themselves and to pay off the national debt of Spain. The Swiss returned to Compostella "like a duke," to use his own words. The affair, which had at first been kept a profound secret, was speedily divulged. It was, indeed, resolved that the investigation, which involved consequences of so much importance, should take place in a manner the most public and imposing. A solemn festival was drawing nigh, and it was deemed expedient that the search should take place on that day. The day arrived. All the bells in Compostella pealed. The whole populace thronged from their houses, a thousand troops were drawn up in the square, the expectation of all was wound up to the highest pitch. A procession directed its course to the church of San Roque; at its head was the captain-general and the Swiss, brandishing in his hand the magic rattan, close behind walked the MEIGA, the Gallegan witch-wife, by whom the treasure-seeker had been originally guided in the search; numerous masons brought up the rear, bearing implements to break up the ground. The procession enters the church, they pass through it in solemn march, they find themselves in a vaulted passage. The Swiss looks around.

26 According to the various newspaper reports of the scandal, the sponsor of the Santiago treasure hunt was Ofalia’s minister of finance Alejandro Mon, a future PM who combined tremendous financial genius with a most curious tendency for antics and capriocci. [See Missler, Treasure Hunter, chapter 16.]

27 This is far from the truth. On the contrary: the city authorities of Santiago did their very best to keep the affair secret, so they specifically decided only to allow the dig on the day following this ‘solemn festival’, which was 16 August, the Day of San Roque, trying to avoid a clash between the celebrations in the San Roque complex and the digging. They were, however, unsuccessful and the affair attracted great public attention. [Missler, Treasure Hunter, 136-140.]
"Dig here," said he suddenly. "Yes, dig here," said the meiga. The masons labour, the floor is broken up, - a horrible and fetid odour arises. . . .

Enough; no treasure was found, and my warning to the unfortunate Swiss turned out but too prophetic. He was forthwith seized and flung into the horrid prison of Saint James, amidst the execrations of thousands, who would have gladly torn him limb from limb.

The affair did not terminate here. The political opponents of the government did not allow so favourable an opportunity to escape for launching the shafts of ridicule. The Moderados were taunted in the cortes for their avarice and credulity, whilst the liberal press wafted on its wings through Spain the story of the treasure-hunt at Saint James.

"After all, it was a TRAMPA of Don Jorge's," said one of my enemies. "That fellow is at the bottom of half the picardias which happen in Spain."

Eager to learn the fate of the Swiss, I wrote to my old friend Rey Romero, at Compostella. In his answer he states: "I saw the Swiss in prison, to which place he sent for me, craving my assistance, for the sake of the friendship which I bore to you. But how could I help him? He was speedily after removed from Saint James, I know not whither. It is said that he disappeared on the road."  

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28 This is Borrow’s own embellished and dramatized version of the report which he read in the Eco del Comercio nº 1,584 of 1 September 1838. In reality, the Swiss set out only with a number of masons and treasury scribes, but without a military escort, on the morning of 17 August. They did not dig in the chapel of San Roque itself, but in the adjacent VD-clinic known as the Hospitalillo de San Roque, and not in any ‘vaulted passage’ but in the hospital latrines! There is no reason to think the Captain General was present at the affair; and in any case he could not possibly be the same ‘captain general’ Borrow mentions in chapter 33 above, since that officer was leading troops in southern Galicia at the time (see footnote 11 to that chapter). Furthermore, the Meixa never existed. [Missler, Treasure Hunter, 140ff & 187f.]

29 If there were, no record has survived of it. The Diario de Sessiones de las Cortes makes no mention of it; which comes as small surprise since the Cortes (i.e. the Spanish parliament) were, in any case, closed between late June and early November. [Missler, Treasure Hunter, 188.]

30 There were indeed various jocular articles published in such newspapers as the Eco del Comercio, Nosotros, and Modesto Lafuente’s Fray Gerundio, in the latter days of August and the first days of September 1838. [Missler, Treasure Hunter, chapter 20 & appendix 2.]

31 Once again we encounter Borrovian hyperbole and embellishment. The letter was in reality a simple business note from Rey Romero, concerned mainly with money owed and the red tape necessary to liberate Borrow’s confiscated books from quarantine. Only at the very end, as an afterthought, the old bookseller added:

‘The German of the treasure came here last year, backed by the government, to unearth it. However, a few days after his arrival he was thrown in jail, from where he wrote to me, explaining who he was and pointing out that he was the person whom you recommended. For this reason my son went to see him in prison. He told [my son] that you had also been arrested, something which I could barely believe. A short while later they took him to Coruña; then they returned him here again, and what happened to him in the end I do not know.’ [Knapp I : 270; Fraser, GBB 12, 81f; Missler, Treasure Hunter, 195.]

The way in which Borrow bent Rey Romero’s text to his literary purposes, is one of the most telling examples of how – in the words of Angus Fraser - he ‘would never let the facts get in the way of a good story’! [Fraser, Sleeping, 30]
Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. Where in the whole cycle of romance shall we find anything more wild, grotesque, and sad, than the easily-authenticated history of Benedict Mol, the treasure-digger of Saint James?

'Easily authenticated' as it might be, it took until 1998 for a scholar to unearth the truth behind Borrow’s Santiago Treasure Hunter. Modesty forbids the present editor to mention the name of that prodigy…