

7 BEST SHORT STORIES BY **PIERRE LOUYS**

EDITED BY AUGUST NEMO



TACET BOOKS

7 *best*
short stories by
Pierre Louÿs

EDITED BY
August Nemo

Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[The Author](#)

[Woman and Puppy](#)

[The New Pleasure](#)

[Byblis](#)

[Lêda](#)

[Immortal Love](#)

[The Artist Triumphant](#)

[The Hill Of Horsel](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

The Author

Pierre Louÿs was a French poet and writer, most renowned for lesbian and classical themes in some of his writings. He is known as a writer who sought to "express pagan sensuality with stylistic perfection". He was made first a Chevalier and then an Officer of the Légion d'honneur for his contributions to French literature.

Pierre Louÿs was born Pierre Félix Louis on 10 December 1870 in Ghent, Belgium, but relocated to France where he would spend the rest of his life. He studied at the École Alsacienne in Paris, and there he developed a good friendship with a future Nobel Prize winner and champion of homosexual rights, André Gide. From 1890 onwards, he began spelling his name as "Louÿs", and pronouncing the final S, as a way of expressing his fondness for classical Greek culture (the letter Y is known in French as *i grec* or "Greek I"). During the 1890s, he became a friend of the noted Irish homosexual dramatist Oscar Wilde, and was the dedicatee of Wilde's *Salomé* in its original edition. Louÿs thereby was able to socialize with homosexuals. Louÿs started writing his first erotic texts at the age of 18, at which time he developed an interest in the Parnassian and Symbolist schools of writing.

Woman and Puppy

I

In Spain the Carnival does not finish, as in France, at eight o'clock on the morning of Ash Wednesday. Over the wonderful gaiety of Seville the memory that "*dust we are*," etc., spreads its odour of sepulture for four days only, and the first Sunday of Lent all the Carnival reawakens.

It is the *Domingo de Pinatas*, or the Sunday of Marmites, the Grand Fête. All the populous town has changed its costume, and one sees in the streets rags and tatters of red, blue, green, yellow or rose, that have been mosquito-nets, curtains or women's garments, all waving in the sunlight and carried by a small body of ragamuffins. The youngsters, noisy, many-coloured and masked, push their way through the crowd of great personages.

At the windows one sees pressed forward innumerable brunette heads. Nearly all the young girls of the countryside are in Seville on such a day as this. Paper confetti fall as a coloured rain, fans shade and protect pretty powdered faces, there are cries, appeals and laughter in the narrow streets. A few thousands of people make more noise on this day of Carnival than would the whole of Paris.

But, on the twenty-third of February in eighteen hundred and ninety-six, André Stévenol saw the end of the Carnival approaching with a slight feeling of vexation, for the week, although essentially one of love-affairs, had not brought him any new adventure. Some previous sojourning in Spain had taught him with what quickness and freedom of the heart the knots of friendship were tied and untied in this still primitive land. He was depressed at the thought that chance

and circumstance had not favoured him. He had had a long paper battle with one young girl. They had fought and teased each other with the serpentine strips of Carnival time, he in the street, she at a window. She ran down and gave him a little red bouquet with "Many thanks, sir." But, alas! she had fled quickly, and at closer view illusions fled also. André put the flower in his coat, but did not put the giver in his memory.

Four o'clock sounded from many clocks. He went by way of the Calle Rodrigo and gained the Delicias, Champs-Élysées of shading trees along the immense Guadalquivir thronged with vessels. It was there that unrolled the Carnival of the elegant.

At Seville the leisured class cannot always afford three good meals per day, but would rather go without them than without the outside show of a landau and two fine horses. Seville has hundreds of carriages, often old-fashioned but made beautiful by their horses, and occupied by people of noble race and face.

André Stévenol made a way with difficulty through the crowd edging the two sides of the vast dusty avenue. The battle of eggs was on. Eggshells filled with paper confetti were being thrown into the carriages, and thrown back, of course. André filled his pockets with eggs and fought with spirit. The stream of carriages filed past—carriages full of women, lovers, families, children, or friends. The game had lasted an hour when André felt in his pocket his last egg.

Suddenly there again appeared a young woman whose fan he had broken with an egg earlier in the combat.

She was marvellous. Deprived of the shade and shelter of the fan that had protected her delicate, laughing features; open on all sides to the attacks of the crowd and the nearest

carriages, she took bravely her part in the struggle, and, standing panting, hatless, flushed with heat and frank gaiety, she gave and received attacks. She appeared to be about twenty-two years old, and must have been at least eighteen. That she was from Andalusia could not possibly be doubted. She was of that admirable type that was born of the intermixing of Arabs and Vandals, of Semites with the Germans. Such mixing has brought together in a little valley of Europe all the perfection of two races.

Her body, long and supple, was expressive in every line and curve. One felt that even were she veiled one would be able to divine her thought, and that she laughed with her limbs, even as she spoke with her shoulders and her bosom, with grace and with liberty. Her hair was of dark chestnut, but at a distance shone almost black. Her cheeks were of great softness as to contour. The edges of the eyelids were very dark.

André, pressed by the crowd close to her carriage, gazed at her intently. His heart-beats told him that this woman would be one of those who were destined to play a part in his life. At once he wrote with pencil on his Carnival egg the word "QUIERO," and threw it as one might a rose into her hands.

Quiero is an astonishing verb. It is "to will," "to desire," "to love." It is "to go in quest of," it is "to cherish." In turn, and according to how used, it expresses an imperative passion, or a light caprice. It is a prayer or an order, a declaration or a condescension. Often it is but an irony. André looked as he gave it the look that can mean "I would love to love you." She put the curious missive in a sort of hand-bag, and the stream of traffic took her on. André lost sight of her after a vain attempt to follow.

Saddened he slowly returned. For him all the Carnival was shrouded and ended. Should he have been more

determined and found a way in the crowd? How could he find her again? It was not certain that she lived in Seville. If not, it might be impossible to find her. And little by little, by an unhappy illusion, the image that his mind held of her became more charming. Certain details of her sweet features that had only won a moment's curious notice now became transmuted in the crucible of memory into the principal things that made up her tender attitude. There was a certain detail in the dressing of the hair, an extreme mobility in the corners of the lips. The latter changed each instant in form and expression. Often almost hidden, often almost curved upwards, rounded, slender, pale or darkened, animated, so to speak, with a varying flame of life and soul. Ah! perhaps one could blame all the rest of that face—say that the nose was not Grecian, the chin not Roman; but not to colour with pleasure at the sight of those little lip-corners was to be past all forgiveness in this world.

So his thoughts flew on and on till a voice cried behind him rough but warning: a carriage was passing quickly in the narrow street. In the carriage was a young woman who, when she saw André threw gently towards him, as one would throw a rose, an egg inscribed "Quiero."

But, now, after the word there was a decided flourish. It was as if the fair one had wished to reply by stressing his own one-word message.

II

Her carriage had turned the corner of the street. André went in pursuit, anxious not to lose a second chance that might be the last. He arrived as the horses went through the gates of a house in the Plaza del Triunfo. The great black gates closed upon the rapidly caught silhouette of a woman.

Without doubt it would have been wiser if he had prepared to learn the name and family, or mode of life of the stranger, before bursting into all the divine unknown of any such intrigue, in which, knowing nothing, he could not be master of anything. André nevertheless resolved not to quit the place without a first effort to find out something. He deliberately rang the gate bell.

A young custodian came, but did not open the gates.

"What does Your Grace demand?"

"Take my card to the Señora."

"To what Señora?"

"To the one who lives here, I presume."

"But her name?"

"I say that your mistress awaits me."

The man bowed and made a deprecatory sign with his hands, then retired without opening the gates or taking the card.

Then André rang a second and third time. Anger had made him discourteous.

"A woman so prompt to reply to a declaration of this type," he thought, "cannot be surprised that one insists upon

trying to see her.” It did not occur to him that the Carnival and the bacchanal forgives passing follies, that are not usually permitted in normal social life.

What was to be done? He paced to and fro, but there was no sight of her and no sign. Near the house was a stall-keeper whom André bribed and questioned. But the man replied—

“The Señora purchases of me, but if she knew I talked of her to any one she would buy of my rivals. I can only tell you her name: she is the Señora Dona Concepcion Perez, wife of Don Manuel Garcia. Her husband is in Bolivia.”

André heard no more, but returned to his hotel and remained there undecided. Even upon learning of the absence of the Señora’s husband, he had not also learnt that all the chances were upon his side. The reserve of the dealer, who seemed to know more than he would care to say, rather left one with the idea that there was another and luckier lover already chosen and enthroned. The attitude of the servant at the gates increased this awkward afterthought.

André had to return to Paris in two weeks’ time. Would those weeks suffice for planning and effecting an entry into the life of a beautiful young dame, whose life was without much doubt planned, rounded, complete?

While thus troubled with his incertitudes a letter was handed to him. It had no address on the envelope. He said, “Are you sure that this letter is for me?”

“It has just been given to me for Don Andrés Stévenol.”

The letter was written upon a blue card, and was as follows —

“Don Andrés Stévenol is begged to not make so much noise, to not give his name or demand to know mine. If he is out walking to-morrow about three on the Empalme route a carriage will be passing. It may stop.”

André thought how easy life was, and already had visions of approaching intimacy. He even sought for and murmured the most tender little forms of her charming Christian name Concepcion, Concha, Conchita, Chita.



On the morning of the morrow André Stévenol had a radiant awakening. The light flooded his room, which had four windows. There also came to him the murmurs of the town. There were the feet of horses passing, street cries, mules' bells, and the bells of convents.

He could not recall having known a morning as happy as this present one was; no, not for a long time. He flung out his arms and stretched them; then held them tightly folded around his breast as though to give himself the illusion or the anticipation of that eagerly awaited embrace.

"How easy, how simple the affairs of life are, after all!" So he mused, smiling. "Yesterday, at this hour I was alone, without an object to fill my mind, almost without a thought. It was merely necessary to take a walk and, behold! a change of scene, a love-affair in view. What is the use of taking any notice of refusals, of disdain, or any such things. We desire and demand, and the women give themselves. Why should it ever be otherwise?"

He rose, and in dressing-gown and slippers rang for his bath to be prepared. Whilst waiting with his forehead pressed to the window-panes he stared into the thoroughfare before him, now full of the stir of day. The houses in sight were painted in light colours that Seville favours as a rule: colours like the gay tints of women's dresses—cream, rose, green, orange, violet, but not the fearful brown of Cadiz or Madrid, or the crude white of Jérez. There were orange-trees in sight, bearing fruit; running fountains and laughing girls, holding their shawls close. From all sides come the sound of the mules' bells. André could not then imagine any other place in which to live but—Seville.

He finished dressing, and slowly sipped a little cup of the thick Spanish chocolate, then, easy in mind, almost aimlessly he went out into the busy street.

By chance he went the shortest way, to the Plaza del Triunfo. Then he remembered that he was not to haunt the residence of his "mistress," as he called her to himself, so he went to Las Delicias. The place was strewn with paper and the usual signs of the Carnival. It was also deserted, for Lent had recommenced. Nevertheless, by a way that led from the city's outskirts, André saw coming towards him one whom he recognized.

"Good-day, Don Mateo," he said, holding out his hand. "I had not thought of seeing you so soon."

"Well, here I am, alone, idle and at a loose end. I stroll about in the morning and evening, and fill up most of the day reading or playing in some way. It's a dull sort of existence."

"But you have nights that console the monotony of the days, if one may credit the chatter of the city busybody?"

"Whoever says so says wrongly. From now to the day of his death Don Mateo Diaz has no woman about him. But do not let us talk about me. For how long are you still going to remain here?"

Don Mateo was a Spaniard, forty years old, to whom André had been introduced during his first stay in Spain. He was a man of florid phrase and declamatory gesture, very rich, and famed for his love affairs. So André was surprised to hear that he had renounced the pomps and vanities of the flesh, but did not attempt to weary him with questions.

They walked by the river for a time, and all their talk was of Spain, its people, its policy, and history.