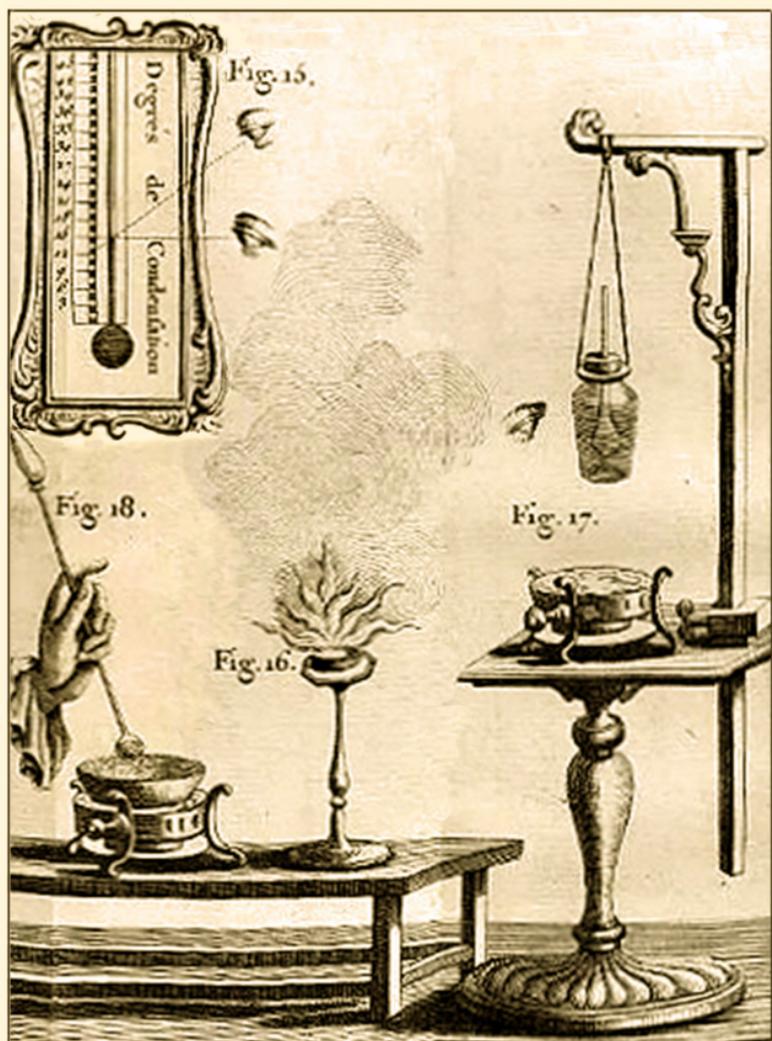


# SO MUCH SUNBURN.



Brunana Libre. Vol. III.

Diego Colomba.



Diego Colomba

SO MUCH SUNBURN



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*This translation serves only informative purposes.*

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Cultura  
**Santa Fe**  
Provincia

## **The errand (extract)**

Segundo is one of the few siblings Grandma still has. They used to be fourteen brothers and sisters. Delia, whom grandma often meets, and Setimio (Seventh), of whom she has practically no news, are the other two. His father named him Segundo (Second) because he was born after Primero (First). Then the others were born: Terzo, Cuarto, Quinto, Quinto, Sexto and Séptimo. Grandma should have been named First. And Segundo, Third. But women did not matter for their father. In short, five of the brothers have already died. In a disorderly way.

Grandma knows Segundo has abandoned himself and the vegetable garden is a mess. She knows people find him “amused” when they pass by the farm to buy vegetables. She knows because they come to tell her. Without going any further, this morning they found him in his bed, complaining of fever and cough. Grandma feels a little sympathy for her brother. “What can you ask of a man who has worked all his life,” she asks and spits out the dark water of

the first mate, “and ends up widowed, with daughters living far from town?”

It’s no surprise that Segundo has indulged in drinking. He has always liked it. But her brother is a grown man. And the years have made him lose the fear of things. Of course it’s a mistake, Grandma thinks, because once the liver goes bad, it’s no longer works. Unfortunately, the one who walks in a daze does not pay attention to body’s warnings. Lack of appetite, for example.

Without Grandpa’s truck, which is in the countryside, it is impossible for Grandma to get to the farm. And she doesn’t want to owe favors to anyone. That’s why she sends me. She says that in an hour, more or less, I’ll be at Segundo’s. Of course, she strictly forbids me to take the shortcut on the lagoon side. People there don’t like strangers wandering around. She asks me to bring him that pudding with raisins that is on the counter. It is the one he likes the most. And a bottle of good wine, because she’s not going to play dumb at this stage of the game.

“Be careful with the pudding. But above all,

be careful with the bottle, because wine is expensive and that's what Segundo will regret the most if it breaks." Grandma fills me with recommendations. "Clap your hands before going in, just in case he's with company. And don't go around checking things in the house." She tells me that because she knows I'm always snooping in other people's business. She hands me the vegetable basket. I tell her that it's not necessary, that I can take the things in the grocery bag. But Grandma doesn't agree, because it might ruin the pudding. I haven't left the house yet and I already feel ashamed to be seen with the basket, like little red riding hood in the woods. I insist on the bag. But Grandma doesn't give in.

The one who points the slingshot at an invisible bird is Pinino. When I approach him, he stares at the basket. Apparently he's not in the mood to make fun of me yet. It seems he is not grounded anymore. Yesterday his mother didn't let him out all day because he had broken a glass in Astolfi's shed. She had told him more than twenty times not to throw the pigeons out of the windows. But words are just something that goes into one ear and leaves out through

the other for him.

Pinino's father is a truck driver. And he's hardly ever at home. Unlike most of the truckers in town, who take grain to Rosario or San Lorenzo, he takes machinery to faraway places. When Pinino finds the truck parked in front of the barren lot, he lowers his head and walks more slowly home. He knows he'll get a knock on the head, or two, for some of his bad behavior. Or a belt, if his father thinks that this time he has crossed the line. But no matter how hard he hits him, Pinino doesn't learn. And soon he goes back to his thing again.

On the other hand, if it is his mother who intends to punish him, Pinino jumps into the street and runs away like a flash. His mother runs after him without being able to catch him. Pinino flees across the field, running in leaps, fast as a hare. In the enthusiasm of the race, he can leap over tall bushes, stones, ditches full of water. As she watches him run away, she yells at him things like: "Nothing good can happen to children who rebel against their own mothers. Nothing good in the world. You will regret it".

Pinino's mother is a great believer. She always wears a silver chain with a crucifix on it. If she finds him distracted and manages to pull his ear, she makes the sign of the cross. She believes it is the Devil that makes her son do bad things, such as making the neighbor's cat blind in one eye or climbing trees in looking for birds' nests. If there are eggs, to smash them against the ground. But if there are chicks, to have fun watching the birds peck at him to defend the nest.

I tell him I have an errand to run —to take something to Segundo, my grandmother's brother. Pinino offers to go with me. Not a bad idea, I think. If I went with him, I could take the shortcut and avoid the long detour the road makes to dodge the lagoon. I look back to make sure no one is watching us from the sidewalk. Grandma doesn't like Pinino, she says he's evil. She says so as if it were a contagious disease. She herself has seen him throwing stones to our dovecote. Or at Christmas, when everyone comes out to say hello, how he has fun throwing fireworks at the toads.

I tell him yes, that he can come with me.

Fanny, the dressmaker, watches us go by. So does old Toñati's wife, who is watering her sidewalk. It is impossible to go unnoticed in this neighborhood. If someone asks me on the way back, I will say Pinino walked with me only a couple of blocks —the last remaining blocks of the town, with lined-up trees and ditches, and one house next to the other. You realize that the town ends there because you suddenly feel the country breeze on your face. And the dirt road narrows into a single trace, surrounded by wire fences and rough straw. Few people circulate over there, some town tractors or the watering truck that goes or comes from the tank losing a trickle of water. From time to time you can hear occasional neighing, birdsongs or the quacking of ducks looking for the lagoon.

