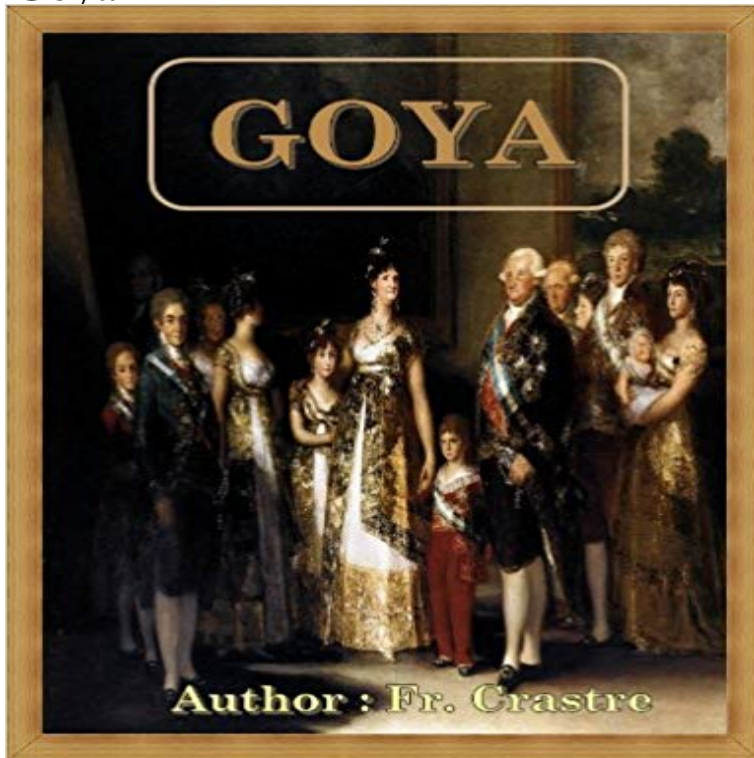


Goya



Francisco Jose Goya was born at Fuendetodos, in the province of Aragon, on the 13th of March, 1746. His father, Jose Goya, and his mother, Gracia Lucientes, were humble peasants and lived upon the product of the sluggish fields that surrounded their modest home. What the childhood of Jose was, we do not know, for his biographers are silent upon this point. They content themselves with saying that he aided his parents in the daily round of tasks upon the farm. As to his education, it was certainly that of all the young peasant boys of the Spanish farming districts. The child must have acquired the first rudiments from the village priest, or perhaps from the monks of the nearest convent. Reading, writing, and a little arithmetic made up the whole equipment that young Jose possessed at the age of fifteen. How his taste for drawing was first born, what occurrence or what object awakened his artistic instinct, we do not know. Perhaps, like so many others, he became suddenly conscious of his vocation at the sight of some of those cruel and violent pictures representing scenes of the Passion, such as abound in Spanish churches, and it is not unlikely that his youthful soul received a profound and lasting impression. From the moment of his arrival he came fully under the spell of the marvels accumulated in the Eternal City. He passed entire days in the presence of the masterpieces of the great artists. He admired them with all his heart, yet without surrendering his right to independent criticism. He recognized instinctively that there was nothing in all these illustrious compositions which corresponded to his own personal temperament, and that his fiery soul could ill adapt itself to the calculated and almost geometric composition of the great frescoes in the Vatican. But he possessed too deep a reverence for art to disdain the admirable science of those great forerunners. There,

beyond question, was the ideal opportunity for study; and in the presence of those celebrated canvases he absolutely forgot himself; he analyzed their intimate beauties, compared the styles and colour schemes of the different schools, scrutinized their methods, and forced himself to penetrate and understand them. He did not attempt to copy a single one of them; he felt that he would gain nothing by doing so, but that on the contrary he might lose. This singular method of abstract study, which may be called the method of intuition, explains perhaps how so frank an individuality as that of Goya, far from being enfeebled by contact with the past, became on the contrary stronger and more genuinely alive. As a matter of fact, his talent owes nothing, or practically nothing, to the art of Italy.

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