

that they were favouring the cause of Don Carlos—of whom there is no doubt the large majority were most devoted adherents—the preparations for the coming blow were made by adding fuel to the flame, and inciting the anger of the people against them. The convents and monasteries were reported to be only so many asylums, where the adherents of the Pretender found a ready refuge and hearty welcome. Many were the reports spread in every direction, even that of poisoning the wells was industriously circulated. Popular fury burst forth at last. In Barcelona, Zaragoza, and other towns, the convents were attacked by the infuriated populace, the friars found no safety from their vengeance, even at the foot of the altars, which were crimsoned with their blood; many fell victims to the rage of their enemies, while others with difficulty found safety in flight. The existing government seemed to bow before the general expression of popular feeling; they resigned the power, which fell into the hands of Mendizabel, under whose ministry the decree came forth. The vast possessions of the clergy were confiscated, and the inmates of the monasteries and convents were thrown upon that world from which they had been so long secluded, wanderers and houseless, to commence life anew, receiving a small stipend, barely sufficient for their support.

Many sought refuge in foreign climes, others retired to their homes, others accepted the charge of some neighbouring parish, while some few remained in their deserted convents. Sad must it have been for these last to wander through their ruined cloisters, those cold and dreary passages, once peopled by their brotherhood, and look down on the fruitful orchards and fair lands which once were theirs—now transferred to the hands of strangers, who enrich themselves with their produce while they reside in some distant spot. The sale of these vast

possessions did not benefit the coffers of the state as much as was anticipated by those who have been so eager to bring about the work of spoliation. Many were afraid of investing money from a feeling of insecurity—a dread that some future government, actuated by different motives, might entertain the idea of restoring the confiscated property to its rightful owners. Much that was purchased was paid for in paper issued by the government, and some few may, perhaps, have been deterred from a feeling of reverential awe at appropriating to themselves property which so recently belonged to the Church.

That the clergy possessed far too much wealth in this country no one will deny. The great number of monastic remains, which crowd every city and village in Spain, testify how they established themselves over the length and breadth of the land. Wheresoever the traveller turns his steps, he comes across some palace convent, rearing its head in the ancient capitals of Spain's many kingdoms; or if he wanders into the mountain districts, he will find a monastic building nestling in the depths of the tranquil vale, or crowning with its frowning battlements the beetling crags of the lone Sierra. Nothing but ruins! Spain is indeed a land of ruins, which tell of the power of the priesthood in days gone by, and of its utter nothingness in these. It has passed away as though it never had been; and the country, where so much has been done in the name of religion, is now more indifferent to it than any other nation. Although much may have been gained by throwing so large an amount of property into general circulation among a class who will turn it to more account and diffuse its benefits more generally—although in a comprehensive view it may have benefited the country, still, individually, it must have been a sad blow to thousands of poor people, both in the towns and in the rural districts, who were employed by the

religious communities, or who depended upon them for assistance and relief in their sufferings and distress. Here the great proprietors seldom visit their possessions ; in the country villages there is no one to whom the poor can look up to as their friends and protectors. This want was, in some measure, supplied by the convents ; a vast number of dependents clustered round these buildings, and their inmates were always ready to aid the poor and bestow alms upon the needy. If their possessions were extensive, they were at least resident landlords, and spent their revenues among the people from whom they were derived. None were turned away from their hospitable roofs. But now, huge piles of tottering walls alone remain to remind them that their benefactors have been removed ; all is silent, where the gentle voice of charity offered the means of lessening their misery in this world, while the minister of religion was ready to soothe them with words of comfort for the next.

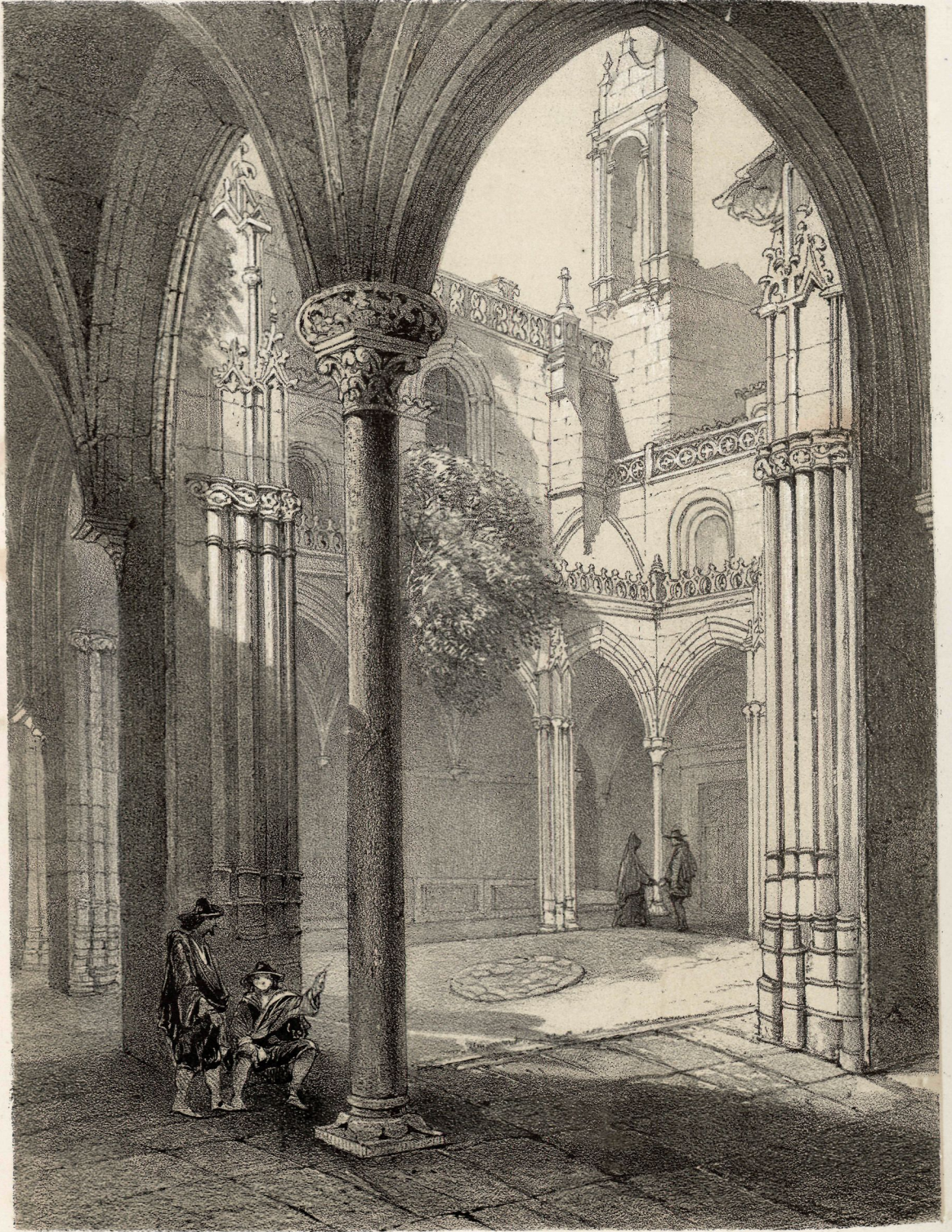
All great and sudden changes must be accompanied by suffering to some, and by gain to others, and in this instance many will be found who are as enthusiastic in their approbation of the extinction of the religious orders, as others will be vehement in condemning it. But, although there may much to be said in its favour, and much against it—as affecting the political or religious state of the country—much to praise and much to blame, but one opinion can be entertained as to the reckless spirit of destruction which has levelled to the ground some of the most glorious evidences of the faith and piety of bygone days, involving the inmates and their dwellings in one general annihilation. The preservation of their dwellings could not necessarily have involved the return of the monks ; they might have been adapted to other purposes, converted into some use which would have insured their preservation ; and some, which possessed

beauty as specimens of architecture, or were celebrated as classic spots in Spanish history, might have been guarded for their own intrinsic worth. The great majority are converted into barracks or prisons, where the soldiers and the galley slaves destroy the venerable monuments, and profane the cloister and the church; while others are sold for the value of their materials, and a few thousand reals are taken for triumphs of architectural skill, which it would cost millions to erect. The libraries have been dispersed, or have mouldered away uncared for; the pictures which adorned the churches, have been scattered among foreign collections, and many have been defaced and lost; some of the elaborately carved choirs have been taken to museums, but many are rotting in the crumbling churches; the ashes of the dead have been torn up and scattered to the winds, and the costly monuments, which the pride and piety of past generations led them to erect over the graves of their relatives, have been mutilated or destroyed.

It is unfortunately too true—but it so nevertheless—that wherever the traveller turns his eye in Spain, he has but to exclaim: “How sad! how melancholy! what a pity this should be left to destruction!” He has to utter one unceasing lamentation, to moan over everything he sees, for everything speaks of neglect, decay and ruin. The same regrets may be re-echoed in every town he visits. A spirit of utilitarianism has seized hold of the Peninsula, and while Spaniards are sighing for railroads, and other evidences of the civilization of the nineteenth century, they are allowing all traces of the past to vanish from the land, forgetting that they might combine the two, and that while they seek to have a Present, worthy of other nations, they might still cherish all that could recal with pride the memory of the Past.

But to return to the Cartuja, whose mouldering walls called forth the above remarks. This monastery was





CARTAJA, XERES.

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founded in 1475 by a Genoese, Alvaro Oberto de Valetto, and its Doric portal was erected by Andrés de Rivera. The façade has been much injured by modern improvements. There are several courts with fountains in the centre, and the two cloisters, which always form so characteristic a feature in buildings dedicated to the followers of San Bruno, are of Gothic architecture. The hand of time has stamped the beautiful proportions of the smaller one with a damp, ruined look; and the wild fig, which grows upon its buttresses, and climbs along the decorated parapet, contrasts with the rich colours of the stone. From this cloister, a corridor leads into the church. The groined roof is painted in blue and silver stars; the carved wood-work of the choir still remains, a screen, as is customary, dividing off a portion for the lay brethren. The high altar, denuded of its ornaments, stands in reproach, as it were, of the desecration that has been carried on around; its design is truly elegant and tasteful, in lozenges of black and white marble, with a plain black cross in the centre. The altars of the side chapels, all of costly marbles, have been torn down and broken—some lying about, while others have been sold and converted into chimney-pieces.

Behind the church are various smaller chapels and apartments; likewise the ovens, in which the bread for consecration was prepared. The refectory also opens out of the inner cloister,—an apartment but little used by the Carthusians—the rules of their order only allowing them to dine together upon fête days, or when one of the fraternity died, when they met to console each other on the loss they had sustained. A large cross of rough wood is placed against the wall at one extremity. In the large outer cloister are the cells for the monks, which I have already noticed, where they had each a habitation to themselves, with an aperture in the wall, through

which their meals were handed to them, as they always dined alone, save on the occasions just alluded to. The centre of this outer cloister is planted with cypresses, and here the monks were buried. Magnificent as it is, I prefer the small, low walls of the humble cemetery of their brethern at the Cartuja of Miraflores, near Burgos; it seems more befitting those who had foresworn the vanities of the world, a meet resting-place for men who passed their lives in prayer. And, perhaps, the Carthusians of Miraflores had in life acted up more to the rules of their order, for they were in reality poor, and could not rival, in the splendour of their monastery, with their wealthier brethern on the banks of the Guadalete.

Reflecting on these changes, we were wandering about unmolested in the courts, where a few short years before the footsteps of a woman spread consternation in the minds of the worthy monks, and perilled both their present and future welfare. No female is ever allowed to enter the precincts of any building dedicated to the disciples of San Bruno. In 1418, this rule was, however, so far relaxed, as to admit of sovereigns and members of reigning families entering them; but the inmates of the Cartuja of Xeres seemed unwilling to admit even of these exceptions, for when Queen Christina happened to be staying in the town, and announced her intention of visiting them, the community were thrown into a state of frightful consternation. One of the monks having bethought himself of a plan by which the convent might be saved from the consequences of the impending calamity, communicated his views to the prior, who at once adopted his suggestion.

The Queen arrived, and was escorted over the building, but behind her followed two monks, who watched with careful anxiety every step she took; and on every stone,

or brick, on which the sovereign trod, a large white mark was soon impressed. The royal visit concluded, the obnoxious bricks were immediately taken up, and thrown into the Guadalete; others were substituted, and peace of mind was restored to the community. How little they then foresaw that, ere a few years passed away, their cloisters would indeed be desecrated, their possessions confiscated, and they themselves cast forth as exiles in the world. We ascended the tower whence there is a fine view, the building standing on a projecting terrace, overhanging the river, and almost insulated by its serpentine windings; the extensive gardens sloping down to its banks, and beyond the vine-covered hills, and the rich plains where Roderick lost his empire and his life. Now it is all covered with golden corn and verdant pastures.

After a long day spent in drawing and wandering about, without any attendants to mark our footsteps, we returned to Xeres to dine at the hospitable house of a fellow-countryman, to whose kindness we owed much during our stay, and under whose guidance we had been to the Cartuja.

And now our riding preparations were complete; all arrangements had been made with the owner of the horses, and our provisions and necessaries for the journey being packed, we sallied forth from Xeres, on the road to Arcos. A first start is always followed by many stoppages, some of the luggage is sure to tumble off the horses; the guides, as yet unused to it, do not distribute the weight equally, the great secret of making the horses carry their loads with comfort to themselves; this and that have to be arranged, and re-arranged, but at last things are right, and one gets fairly under weigh. The heat was intense, and the dust at first insupportable, for we had to keep to a sort of road for some short distance,

with cactus and aloe hedges jealously guarding the rich vineyards on each side with their stiff spear-like leaves and sharp prickly points.

We soon, however, reached the open plain, when the road gradually diminished into a mere track-way through the dwarf palm and brushwood. Freed from dust, and refreshed by a slight breeze, we passed over the two leagues that brought us to the Castillo del Moro, an old ruined castle on a height, commanding the plain, in which stands Xeres and its surrounding vineyards. Here we entered upon an undulating country, and passed the great Carthusian farms, once so celebrated for their breed of horses. Though scarcely a sign of habitation appeared, still the land seemed well cultivated, and the vast fields of the black-bearded wheat and dwarf pea were varied now and then by small grassy knolls, covered with low brushwood and glittering with wild flowers.

We were gradually approaching the mountains, and at last we saw the town of Arcos; but from the transparency of the atmosphere, and the nature of the country, interspersed as it is by strange ravines, or rather clefts, which oblige one to take all sorts of "détours" to get round them, you often see a place ages before you reach it, and so, like the mirage which tantalizes the wanderer in the desert, Arcos appeared to recede as we advanced. We kept ascending, and the keen mountain air warned us that we had left the sunny neighbourhood of the low country round Xeres.

At length, a turn in the road disclosed to us the town of Arcos, and most picturesque it appeared, crowning the heights of a steep and precipitous cliff, at whose base flowed the Guadalete. A long line of houses crested the rocks, and at the extremity, where the ridge terminated abruptly, a lower town might be seen nestling in the valley. Nothing could be more striking than the view

as we wound along, with the town before us standing on the giddy heights, the luxuriant vegetation of the plain, dotted over with white houses, encircled by their olive-groves, the tall peak of the Cristobal beyond, and an amphitheatre of mountains closing in the scene, all lighted up by a Southern sunset, which sparkled on the water, while a rich glow of light lingered on the yellow face of the cliff and on the summits of the distant mountains.

We arrived late, and stopped at a small posada just at the entrance of the town. It looked clean, and the rooms were all scrupulously whitewashed; but as to accommodation, there was nothing save the bare walls. The travellers who flocked there, it seems, were not in the habit of requiring beds, for our hostess did not possess such luxuries. We had, however, fortunately come provided with letters of introduction to the various places on our road; and one was immediately despatched to the Alcalde, with one of those loving, beseeching, flattering notes such as Spaniards love to receive, and only those who have been long in Spain know how to write. An appeal to a Spaniard's kindness and good-nature is rarely made in vain, and the worthy Alcalde soon made his appearance, offering us everything which belonged to him, and earnestly requesting us to take shelter under his roof. This we declined, for our baggage was all unpacked, and great would have been the trouble of changing our quarters; but we accepted with many thanks his offers of sending all that we required. In a short time we had beds and bedding, and every requisite for all our party, and by a proper division of labour we soon arranged everything for our evening's accommodation. We were easily satisfied; our rooms opened on a small terrace, where, in the bright starlight, we discussed, over our coffee, the pleasures of the day and the arrangements for the morrow.

The situation of Arcos was one very frequently chosen