

extreme brilliancy of its deep green leaves and large white flowers; but here it had shared the fate of everything else, and was concealed beneath the same dusty mantle. It was getting dusk as we reached Mengibar, where a suspension bridge crosses the Guadalquivir, which is here a respectable stream flowing between deep sandy banks.

We had changed our fellow-travellers in Jaen, and our new companion told us, for our consolation, that this bridge was not considered safe. He said it cost four millions of reals, but the contractor spent only one half on the work, and pocketed the remainder; and then he indulged in the usual remarks which Spaniards make about the wholesale system of robbery, universal in all public transactions throughout the country. They all seem aware of the state of things, but in this respect the consciousness of the abuse does not appear to lead to any amendment, for they go on just the same, all availing themselves of the first opportunity to practise the very thing they condemn so eloquently. Our companion whiled away the rest of the journey to Baylen with wonderful accounts of robbers' deeds, hair-breadth escapes and strange adventures, enough to put one's nerves into an agitated condition, considering the darkness of the night and loneliness of the country, had not the presence of the Guardias along the road assured us we were comparatively safe. Spaniards do revel in robbers' stories, and now that they have some excuse for talking about them, they really form the staple subject of conversation. We reached Baylen in the middle of the night, having duly had our friend's house placed at our disposal, and many offers of assistance, which I am sure would have been most joyfully given had we required them.

Although, according to our ideas, the Spaniards may

be inhospitable, no people can be more ready to do a good-natured thing for another person, and they will inconvenience themselves with pleasure to oblige you. After a mutual change of civilities, we went to the hotel, where we found a strange mixture of comfort and misery. A French waiter seemed to promise great things; he proved, however, to be a Canadian, and how he had found his way to Baylen was a mystery we did not fathom. A remarkably nice French service of China made its appearance with the coffee, but there was no table on which to put it, and our chairs were all soon occupied in pic-nic style with some of the provisions that we had fortunately brought. After some difficulty we found beds on which to repose until the diligence passed from Madrid to Seville, in which we hoped to find places; but before retiring to rest, I had a most animated discussion with the administrador of the diligence, as he refused to refund the money promised in the event of the places being taken on to Madrid, which they all were the moment we arrived. He called the man at Granada a *ladron* (a thief), and when I remonstrated on the impropriety of his not fulfilling the promise made to me there, he told me he could not stand such language. I threatened to refer the whole thing to the office at Madrid; and in justice I must add, that through the interference of a friend there, part of the money actually was refunded.

At three o'clock in the morning, we were roused from our very unsatisfactory slumbers by the agreeable intelligence that there was plenty of room in the diligence, and we were relieved from the dread of having to spend a few days in this lively place; for Baylen is a town which even Spaniards would hardly like as a residence, although they may always be boasting of its glories. We proceeded to Cordoba; but as we retraced our steps to Baylen again,

within a month, to make a short excursion into the Castiles, I will at once continue on the route to Madrid, and leave the description of Cordoba until later, as we revisited it on our return to Seville.

Baylen is celebrated for the battle which was fought here in 1808, the one battle which, according to Spanish historians, turned the fortune of war in the Peninsula, and gave the first blow to the arms of Napoleon. The hero of it, Castaños, Duke of Baylen, died in September last, but a few short days after England lost her greatest general. He had been made a Grandee, but otherwise had not received much from a country whose gratitude expended itself in fine words. He lived sometimes in actual poverty, and during many periods of his life, he did not receive his pay regularly, as he himself mentions in his will. Nothing could be more unpretending or humble than the terms of his will; he desired that no parade might be made, that his body might be carried to the church of the parish in which he died by his own servants, and conveyed to the cemetery and laid in the ground, not in a niche, but at the foot of the one in which his sister was buried. He concluded by leaving some few legacies to his servants and dependents. But the government chose to honour him in death, and he was buried by royal decree in the Church of the Atocha, amid all the pomp and splendour of a state funeral.

From Baylen, the road leads to the Carolina, a formally-built village, peopled by foreign colonists, who were brought here to cultivate lands which the expulsion of the Moors had left deserted. About two leagues to the right of La Carolina is the scene of the celebrated battle of the Navas de Tolosa, gained by Alfonso VIII. in 1212. A shepherd led the Christian arms through the mountain passes, whom the superstitious enthusiasm of those days

converted into San Isidro, the patron saint of Madrid. From the Carolina the road ascends to Santa Elena, which stands on a height commanding an extensive view. It now passes the splendid gorge of the Despeñaperros, a truly alpine pass, which is traversed by a magnificent road laid out in the time of Charles III. Here you ascend the high table-land, the great central plateau of Spain, and here you bid adieu to all fine scenery, and leave behind the orange groves and snowy mountains of Andalucia. You reach the Venta de Cardenas, and before you are the wide, uninteresting steppes of that most hideous of provinces, dull La Mancha. Nothing but dreary wastes, without a tree to gladden the eye in the wide expanse; green, perhaps, for a short period in spring, when the corn is rising; but yellow, dusty, and desolate at all other seasons of the year. The villages wear an air of wretchedness, their inhabitants of misery; the gay, dashing air, and knowing-looking sombrero of the Andaluz, is exchanged for the sober heaviness of the Manchego, with his "montera," or fur cap.

The scene is completely changed; but genius has invested this uninviting land with a charm which nature has denied it; and the very first name you hear on leaving the Despeñaperros, the Venta de Cardenas, recalls the name of Cervantes, and the pages of his immortal work. The traveller through La Mancha seeks carefully for each place recorded in Don Quixote, with as much interest as, in other lands, people endeavour to discover the sites of events which are renowned in history, and the first glimpse of a windmill awakes as much delight as though the sorrowful knight and his faithful squire had lived in truth. Such is the power of genius to invest, with all the interest of reality, the mere creation of the fancy, and people a dreary land with souvenirs of beings who never existed except in the mind of their author.

At Santa Cruz de Mudela, the people crowd around, offering narvajás for sale, of all dimensions, for a mere trifle; and, common as the workmanship is, it is wonderful how they can sell them so cheaply. The next place is Valdepeñas, celebrated for its red wine, much of which is consumed in Madrid. It is carried generally in pig-skins, which gives it a strong pitchy flavour. The same dreary plains lead through Manzanares, with its large plaza and wooden balconies; and beyond, the numerous windmills, dotted about, recall one of the whimsical knight's adventures; in short, every step reminds one of Don Quixote and his honest faithful squire. Even while we were waiting, our attention was attracted by a scene in a barber's shop opposite, in which a worthy padre played a conspicuous part; and we immediately pronounced them to be "the curate and the barber of the village, both of them Don Quixote's intimate acquaintance, who happened to be there at that juncture." A copy of the inimitable work of Cervantes, is an indispensable accompaniment to a journey in La Mancha; it will lighten the weary hours, and give an interest to its interminable plains, while it presents a living picture of the people around.

New Castile is entered, but the scenery does not improve; on the contrary, the villages seem more wretched as you advance. Tembleque will shortly have a little more animation, as the railroad to Valencia is to pass through it, and will before long be finished thus far, about seven leagues south of Aranjuez. It would have been completed long since in any other place, but here money was wanting, and the works progressed but slowly. Nothing could be more desolate-looking than the line of railway crossing this desert waste; half-a-dozen men were carrying about a few baskets of earth, and

seemed to have fallen from the skies, so little sign was there of any human habitation in the neighbourhood. But of all wretched places, perhaps La Guardia is one of the worst, the people living in excavations in the rocks. At last we reach Ocaña, a town celebrated for one of Soult's great victories, in 1809. It is a straggling, miserable-looking place, with a large inn. Here we stopped to rest and take a cup of chocolate, for we had a little time to spare before the train started from Aranjuez. The passengers all made their appearance from the different portions of our vehicle, and we talked over various subjects, until one man attracted our attention above the others from his energetic abuse of the English.

I found at last he was an extensive owner of slaves, and one or two of his vessels had been captured by our ships on the African coast. The manner in which he talked of buying slaves, and the atrocious way in which he spoke of his traffic in them, was enough to make one shudder; and those who heard him would not have required their imaginations to be fired by the pages of a novel, before they awoke to the horrors of slavery. A-propos to this, the enthusiasm with which "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been received in Europe, has extended itself even to the Peninsula, and every wall is now covered with advertisements, announcing half-a-dozen different versions, each purporting to be the only authorised translation, of "La Choza del Tio Tom!"

Further details were interrupted by the summons to depart, and we soon found ourselves once more esconced in the different portions of our lumbering, clumsy-looking vehicle, on our road to Aranjuez. This "Real sitio," or royal country residence, has quite a refreshing appearance, as you descend upon it; here there are actually trees in

the royal park, and the town has a liveable and civilized appearance. The palace is a large, straggling building, and is inhabited by the Court in spring, before the heat drives them to the refreshing breezes of the Guadarramas. The railway station is just in front of the palace, and is at present in a very juvenile state. Everything is taken so quietly and leisurely, that it offers a strange contrast to the bustle of an English railway. It seems an affair of perfect indifference, whether the trains start exactly or not; in fact it is not of the slightest importance; they will wait if there is any one of consequence coming—for it cannot matter. These things, however, must improve when there are more trains, and the line embraces a further extent of road. At present, they go so slowly, and stop at so many small intermediate stations, that they hardly shorten the time. The guards stand with a signal in one hand, and a musket in the other—a curious combination. Some of the stations are regular copies of those in England, and seem quite exotics in the land.

At length you approach Madrid, and what a country to find in the neighbourhood of a capital! Strange infatuation to select such a site for the seat of government, to abandon for such a desert, places like Toledo and Seville and Valladolid! An undulating country lies before you, bare and bleak as man could see, not a tree, not a habitation, the dark chain of the Guadarramas rising in the distance, and immediately in front a low hill crowned with some large buildings, and tall thin spires, and leaden domes. And this is Madrid, the capital of Spain! It has the appearance of a large village; until you reach the very walls, you see no signs of life: no crowded suburbs warn you of the vicinity of a metropolis; all is dead and desert-like, until you actually enter within the gates of the "Villa y Corte

de Madrid." La Corte, as it is designated by Spaniards, is to them the very ne plus ultra of excellence, the paradise of delight, the centre, not only of Spain, but of the world; and many of them are so infatuated with it, that I heard a Spaniard once say, he was quite sure, that if some of his countrymen were going to Heaven, they would keep one eye still fixed upon Madrid!

Within, you seek in vain for any stamp of nationality—it is a noble town, and possesses splendid streets and fine buildings, but anything really Spanish or essentially characteristic is not to be found. If the traveller wishes to see Spain, he must seek it in the time-honoured capitals of her ancient kingdoms, where the Tagus flows beneath the Alcázar of Toledo, where the Guadalquivir reflects the marble palaces of Seville, where Valencia stands amid her far-famed gardens, or Granada rears her Moorish towers in Burgos, Leon, Valladolid, but certainly not here.

Madrid has, in fact, but one recommendation—it is in the centre of the country—and for the sake of that advantage all else has been sacrificed. Vain endeavours have been made to centralise everything, but it is of no avail—the natives of each kingdom still look upon their own capital with a feeling of partiality. They go to Madrid, but merely because it is the residence of the Court; and there it stands, a capital without commerce, without healthful life, without industry, without anything to support it—dependent for everything on distant places, and giving nothing in return for all that it receives. Living is expensive in Madrid. All luxuries come from without, and land-carriage in Spain is slow and dear; fuel is brought from a distance, and even water is a serious item in the expenditure of an establishment, for every drop has to be purchased.



The inhabitants are now engaged in a great work, that of bringing water from a distance; and this undertaking, if really accomplished, will considerably alter and improve the town.

Added to all this, the climate is one of the worst, perhaps, in Europe. The town stands at an elevation of more than two thousand feet above the level of the sea, on the highest point of the great table-land which forms the centre of the Peninsula—according to Humboldt, the largest plateau in the world—and as there are not any forests to catch and break the bleak winds, they sweep over from the Guadarramas with a piercing blast, which often proves extremely dangerous, and the more so from the hot sun, which makes the difference of temperature on opposite sides of the same street so very marked. In summer, the heat is proportionably intense. The great horror of all people here is the “pulmonia,” a complaint which carries its victims off in a few hours; and the fear entertained by the Madrileños of exposing the chest to these insidious blasts is rather amusing to a stranger, until he begins to feel the necessity of taking the same precautions himself. At night it is very trying, after leaving hot and crowded rooms; and people may all be seen, with their pocket-handkerchiefs held tight before their mouths, not daring to open their lips for fear the enemy might take the opportunity of seizing upon them with his unrelenting grasp. This irritating air causes an unusual consumption of dulces and all sorts of sweet, softening lozenges, with which people are always prepared to soothe their throats, and comfort themselves after the rude treatment they receive from these rough and ungentle zephyrs.

Still, Madrid is the residence of the Court, and of all the world who love to bask in the sunshine of royal

favour—the resort of all the place-hunters, or “pretendientes,” who abound in Spain more, perhaps, than in any other country. With all its modern French appearance, it boasts, however, of great antiquity, and claims to have been founded some four thousand years ago. There are, nevertheless, many who dare to doubt the truth of this bold assertion, and maintain that the first time it was really ever mentioned in Spanish history was in 939, when Ramiro II. of Leon took it by storm. The superior glories of Toledo seem quite to have eclipsed the poor little village of Madrid, which was taken by Alfonso VII. after he had obtained possession of the former in 1083. In 1309, the first Cortes was assembled there, and it became gradually a favourite residence of the kings of Castile. The great Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, when he was appointed regent of the kingdom on the death of Ferdinand of Aragon, was the first person who actually established the seat of government within its walls.

Here it was that he sought to curb the discontented spirit of the nobles; and when they asked him by what authority he governed, he pointed to the cannon in the court-yard of his palace, and told them those were his credentials until the arrival of their sovereign Charles V. This monarch contributed much to improve and beautify the royal palace, but it was reserved for Philip II. finally to settle his Court at Madrid, and make it the capital of his kingdom. This monarch may really be considered as its founder; several streets were laid out and planned by his orders, and many convents, hospitals, and other buildings sprang into existence at his mandate. But yet the sovereign at whose will the grand and sombre pile of the Escorial was erected, has not left any edifices in the capital worthy of the high state in which the arts were at that period.

In the reigns of the succeeding monarchs, Madrid glittered with all the splendour of a Court which was gilding the ruin of the country; and in the time of Philip IV. the names of Lope de Vega, Calderon, Quevedo, Valasquez, Murillo, and others shed a lustre over the capital, and literature and art flourished. In 1700 the Bourbons ascended the throne of Spain, and in 1759 their best and greatest King, Charles III., commenced a reign which Madrid has certainly reason to remember. It is to this monarch that Spain owes most of its magnificent roads, which were splendidly laid out, although now so neglected and kept in such wretched repair. In fact, the principal monuments of his rule are roads, bridges, and canals. He planted trees to adorn the Prado, and to him Madrid owes the Museum, the fine gate of Alcalá, the noble buildings of the Custom-House, and sundry others too numerous to mention here. He died in 1788, and the crown descended to his son, a weak and imbecile Prince, beneath whose sway much misery was in store for Spain. Blindly led by his favourite Godoy, he allied himself with France, and Spain became a mere plaything in the hands of Napoleon.

Notwithstanding the internal dissensions, constant revolutions, and intrigues which followed, many great names shone amid the general darkness that was falling on the land; and Jovellanos, Moratin, Melendez, and others are still remembered with pride by their countrymen. In 1808 the King was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Ferdinand, one of the most perfidious tyrants that ever ascended a throne; but it was then too late to redress the grievances under which the country had been suffering; Murat was already at the gates of Madrid, and the new sovereign made a forced journey to Bayonne, where his crown was placed at the feet of the conqueror. The far-famed