

“ Besides, how can the fire-place be compared to the ‘brasero’ under a social aspect ?

“ In the first place, the fire-place is unjust, and a lover of exclusiveness ; it confers all its favours on the two fortunate beings who are seated on either side, saluting the rest of its worshippers but slightly ; the ‘brasero,’ on the contrary, is socialist, and distributes its benefits equally to all its members. The fire-place is semi-circular, the ‘brasero’ round and eternal, like all circles, without beginning or end ; the fire-place burns without warming, the ‘brasero’ warms without burning. The fire-place requires all the ‘entourage’ of a modern throne, with its responsible ministers of poker, tongs, and shovel, to seize and collect ; its brush to sweep ; its fender to guard it ; its public opinion to fan and rouse it by means of the bellows ; its responsibility, which vanishes in smoke—the patriarchal ‘brasero’ reigns and governs alone, or at most with its small brass shovel for a sceptre.

“ And if you examine it, solely under the aspect of tending to the confidence of love, you must still give the preference to the ‘brasero.’

“ Let us picture to ourselves two lovers, in the first bloom of their rising affection, seated opposite each other on each side of a fire-place ; to begin, they are two yards distant from each other, which is not convenient for telling secrets, (you might as well deprive the olla of salt, as love of secrecy.) In the second place, they are ensconced in two enormous and softly-cushioned arm-chairs ; their faces cannot endure the brilliancy of the flame, and their flushed cheeks take shelter behind the shade of a screen, or the projecting corners of the chimney-piece ; take away the expression of the features from love, and it loses its firmest support, for the countenance is the responsible editor of love.

“ Then if the gentleman has to kneel, his garments are

endangered by coming in contact with the black-lead of the hearth, and if he has to surprise a careless hand, his own comes in contact with the poker and tongs.

“ Around the ‘braseró,’ on the contrary, there can be no fear of such disagreeable accidents; there a tiny foot is not removed above an inch from one of more masculine proportions; and it is so easy to shorten that inch!—two snowy hands are extended over the burning ashes, exactly opposite two others clothed in the whitest gloves, and it is so natural to shorten distances!—and then several things must be examined, the quality of those gloves, the shape of the jewelled rings; a look of intelligence is exchanged, some other pretext is discovered, and farewell to the snowy hand which—has melted with the heat of the ‘braseró.’

“ The magic influence of this piece of furniture has likewise a soporific quality, which works upon the heads of guardians and duenas, inducing them involuntarily to take refuge in the arms of Morpheus; and if to this influence should be added that of a Madrid newspaper, lopped of its leading article by the unsparing axe of the Government censor, the effect is certain, and all fall asleep, from the watchful grandmother to the purring cat.

“ All these advantages are possessed by the national ‘braseró.’ We are told, it is true, of treaties and protocols arranged by grave diplomatists in the chimney-corner; but in truth, those which are settled over the ‘braseró’ are not less important, while the hands are carelessly giving a pyramidal form to the heated charcoal, and the small shovel is passing lovingly over the ashes.

“ We see, therefore, that neither in a social nor in a political point of view can the beneficent influence of the English fire-place be compared to that of the Spanish ‘braseró.’ As far as economy is concerned it must have the preference, being more within the reach of all, and

more certain in its effect; and as far as regards shape it must carry away the palm.

“And yet, in spite of all this, the ‘brasero’ is disappearing as knightly costumes have disappeared; and cloaks and mantillas are vanishing, as well as the patriotism of our ancestors, the faith of our forefathers, and our own national belief. And the foreign fire-place, the exotic bonnet, the uncivilized great-coat, the laws and literature of strangers, and the customs and languages of other people are possessing themselves of that society which disowns its own history, of that ungrateful child which affects not to remember its ancestors. Let us assist, therefore, at the last leave-taking of the ‘brasero,’ but before we say farewell, we must bestow on it a gentle tribute, as is the custom of those about to inter one who is deceased:

“May its ashes be light!”



EL BRÁSERO.



CARRO CON BUEYES.

CHAPTER XV.

Los siglos á los siglos se atropellan,
 Los hombres á los hombres se suceden,
 En la vejez sus calculos se estrellan,
 Su pompa y glorias á la muerte ceden :
 La luz que sus espíritus destellan
 Muere en la niebla que vencer no pueden,
 Y es la historia del hombre y su locura
 Una estrecha y hedionda sepultura.

EL DIABLO MUNDO.

CITY OF LEON—CATHEDRAL—BISHOP'S PALACE—BEGGARS—CASTILIANS; THEIR CIVILITY AND PRIDE—CHURCH OF ST. ISIDORE—ROYAL TOMBS—OX-CARTS—MARAGATOS—THE CONSTITUTION JEALOUSLY GUARDED—ENJOYMENTS OF TRAVEL—NATIONAL CUISINE—CROSS THE GUADARRAMAS—THE ESCORIAL—ITS ORIGIN AND VICISSITUDES—GRANDEUR OF ITS CHURCH—A MUSEUM OF RELICS—CHAPEL OF THE SANTA FORMA—THE MAUSOLEUM—CORO—LIBRARY—THE VILLAGE INN.

WE established ourselves very tolerably in our new abode, and joined the circle in the evening round the brasero. There was also another lady staying in the house, the wife of an "empleado." She was a Madrileña; and the poor woman was always sighing over the luxuries of her beloved Madrid, and the misery of

being banished to such a place as Leon. It is, in fact, nothing better than a large village, and its chief population seem to be the staff of clergy attached to the cathedral, an establishment once well befitting the capital of a kingdom, but existing now in utter mockery of its present fallen state.

Oviedo was the first capital of the infant sovereignty of the Christians, as they were struggling for independence in the mountain fastnesses of the Asturias, but by the beginning of the tenth century they gradually extended their conquests, and established their court at Leon. In those days, Leon was often taken by the Moors, and reconquered by the Christians; it was captured by the great Almansor in 996, who razed it to the ground; but it was soon after rebuilt, and remained the seat of government until the death of Bermudo, last King of Leon, in 1037, when Fernando, King of Castile, united it to his own dominions in right of his wife, Bermudo's sister. The two crowns were at times again divided, until at length they were finally united by St. Ferdinand in 1230.

The cathedral is here the first object of interest. After Burgos, the exterior is disappointing; the large towers, of a rich-coloured stone, are surmounted by spires which do not rise to a sufficient elevation. There is a beautiful rose-window over three noble arches, which form almost a portico, so deeply recessed are the doorways within. Between these large arches are the lofty, narrow-pointed ones, which produce a most original effect. The interior is lovely; it grows upon you each successive time that you enter it, and in elegance and lightness it stands unrivalled. It is narrow and lofty; and before the lower tier of windows were blocked up, it must have appeared as though it had been built of glass. It is a miracle of architecture; and on a first visit, you are not sufficiently



THE CATHEDRAL, LEON,

Dickinson, Bro & Kiff.



impressed with the slightness of the walls, making one wonder how the building could have stood so long in this stormy climate. This is the type of the light and elegant in architecture, as Seville is of the massive and imposing: it would be impossible to compare the two, except as they form a contrast to each other. Both are beautiful; and in Seville you may feel overwhelmed by the sombre majesty which clothes religious worship in its severest form. In Leon, the heart looks upward with joyousness, and the fairy columns and variegated windows make one think of the worship of a God of peace and love.

I spent many hours drawing within its walls; and every hour I lingered there, I admired it more and more. It has but three aisles, and there are no side chapels, which is unusual. Formerly there were two rows of painted glass windows, but the lower row has unfortunately been blocked up; the cloisters having been built against the walls on one side, and the other probably arranged to correspond. Such painted glass windows are seldom seen, the colours vie with those of the rainbow, and the deep tones of the reds and greens are unsurpassed; would that the glorious rays of the sun, as they strain through, could fall upon the beautiful cream-coloured stone, in all their changing hues; then, indeed, the effect of those windows would be unrivalled; but, alas! the hand of a barbarous taste has passed over its walls. The interior has been whitewashed, and all the delicate capitals coloured with a yellowish tinge. Man has done his best to injure the beauty of this temple—but it triumphs still.

Beneath the clerestory windows runs a gallery of double-pointed arches with a decorated parapet, apparently almost the only solid piece of masonry in the walls, for the windows are so large, and so close together, it seems hardly possible that the roof can be supported by any-

thing so fragile. There are chapels round the apse, and at the back of the high altar, is the tomb of Ordoño III., who died in 923, and is supposed to have been the founder of the original edifice erected on this site. The present cathedral appears to have been erected towards the close of the twelfth century. A story is told that Ordoño, after one of his victories, desired his chaplain to prepare the best edifice in Leon, and consecrate it as a church. The worthy priest hurried back, and not finding anything better adapted for his purpose than the King's own palace, instantly took possession of it, and the story goes, that his royal master, on his return to his capital, was not overpleased at finding his orders had been so literally complied with.

It is dedicated to Santa Maria de Regla, and the well-known saying gives it the following place among the Spanish cathedrals :

Sevilla en grandeza, Toledo en riqueza

Compostella en fortaleza, Leon en sutileza.

There are no iron screens either before the high altar or the choir, which gives it additional lightness. Lovely as these rejas are, they choke up the churches, and it is quite a relief not to see them. An enormous retablo, richly gilt, disfigures the high altar, being much too heavy for the building, and in the worst taste. A richly-sculptured silver tabernacle is placed in the centre, and the view from hence, standing behind the altar, is charming, facing, as it does, the exquisite rose window over the principal entrance. The trascoro is ornamented with the most splendid alabaster sculptures, adorned with gilding ; it produces a very rich effect, but this is considerably injured by a large blue door, which the canons have put up to make their stalls warmer and more comfortable. The cold of this cathedral is intense, and

to that I can fully bear witness, for although one of the canons, whose acquaintance we made, was extremely kind, and used to have a good hot "brasero" placed close to me while I was drawing, my fingers were nearly frozen. The thinness of the walls and the quantity of glass, must cause this peculiarity, for, generally, churches are the coolest places in summer, and the warmest in winter.

The services are very well performed, and I have seldom seen in Spain a more devout congregation, than were assembled there on Sunday. The sacristy does not contain anything worth seeing; all the plate vanished during the French invasion. The chapel of Santiago is very elegant, of the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, and if possible, the windows surpass those of the cathedral. The adjoining cloisters are very large, forming a most delightful promenade for the chapter. The Gothic arches are supported by elaborately decorated, plateresque pilasters. An exquisite staircase, highly ornamented, leads up to the Sala Capitular; from the windows you look out upon the old city walls, which now run through the centre of the town; in fact, these walls join on to the cathedral, and continue along the southern side. On the side of the cathedral, opposite to the cloisters, stands the Bishop's palace, and although I have witnessed many scenes of wretchedness and misery, I never saw such beggars as came out of that palace early one morning, when we happened to be passing. Such bundles of rags, such a mass of dirt and poverty! They were the very picture of distress; they had all been to receive the weekly charity of the Bishop, and never was charity more required, if one might trust to appearances. They all had the usual wooden shoes, which one feels half disposed to envy them in the muddy streets of Leon; they are not allowed to wear them in the churches, on account of the clatter they make.

The Plaza in front of the cathedral, is barely large enough to obtain a good view of the edifice, and Mr. T. was obliged to put up his instrument on the balcony of a chemist's shop opposite. Nothing could equal the civility of the master of the house. He was a travelled gentleman, and had been in England to see the Exhibition; he did not, however, seem much impressed with the charms of our climate; and when we suggested that that of Leon was quite as bad, if not worse, he begged us to recollect that we were then in November, and that in Leon they had not such weather in summer. His drawing-room had its sofa and chairs placed in due form; everything was placed immediately at our disposal, to make of it whatever use we thought proper.

Let the traveller make up his mind, to treat all ranks of Spaniards with a certain degree of courtesy, and he will always get on. Here it is no use imagining, because a person is beneath you in his rank of life, that he is to be treated as an inferior. He is a Castilian, and that in his estimation is sufficient reason for him to be considered on an equality with the proudest noble in the land, as he will soon give you to understand, if you do not treat him with becoming deference. This equality is perhaps one of the strangest things in Spain, and the free and easy style, in particular, with which servants treat their masters, strikes one at first as most extraordinary. They are extremely independent in manner; and as they neither give, nor require a month's warning, as with us, they very often announce to you in the morning, that they intend leaving, and take their departure in the evening, much to the inconvenience of the household arrangements. This excessive independence is one reason, doubtless, why it is so difficult to procure good servants; even the natives of the country complain of them much, and therefore it is no wonder that it proves so