Madrid, even in the regular course of things, but now unfortunately it occupies above six-and-thirty. The only place of interest we passed was Olmedo, celebrated for several battles fought there in the fifteenth century. Here you begin to see the Guadarramas showing their bold outline, forming a barrier between those plains and the town of Madrid.

Towards night we reached the Fonda San Rafael, a large inn where we had supper; and when day dawned, we were already crossing the range of the Guadarrama, the highest point which the road traverses, and which rises about five thousand feet above the level of the sea. The pass is finely laid out, and a marble lion stands at the summit, where you look down on the dreary, undulating plains of Castile. You descend by a gentle slope now to the village of Guadarrama, about seven leagues distant from Madrid; here we stopped to breakfast at a wretched posada, dignified by the high-sounding title of the "Parador antigua de las dos Castillas." Here it seemed to be the right thing to take a glass of milk, and the blazing wood fire offered many temptations on that cold morning. The wind was bitter, with that piercing air which sweeps over the plains around Madrid, and gives that capital the disagreeable climate for which it is noted.

Just after passing Guadarrama to the right, a huge mass of building attracts the eye, rearing its colossal form against the slope of the mountain, the gleams of the sun resting on its grey-slated roofs and cupolas. This building is the Escorial, one of the most wondrous edifices ever raised by the hand of man. We must turn aside from the road, to visit this giant structure of the gloomy and ascetic Philip. Grand, indeed, is this vast convent palace, and few can gaze on it without feelings of emotion. The stern and sombre Escorial is a fit emblem of grave Castile, as the light and elegant

Alhambra is of sparkling Andalucia! Both equally objects which rivet the attention of the traveller; both unique, and yet so different. The convent palace of the Christian, the palace fortress of the Moslem! Both on the declivities of mountains, whose peaks are alike enveloped in wintry snows; but the one looks over a scene of barren nakedness, while the other commands a plain teeming with vegetation. In the Escorial, the church and convent eclipse the splendour of the palace—in the Alhambra, the palace and the fortress mingle imperceptibly together. The Escorial, whose soaring dome and lonely cloisters impress the mind with feelings of solitude and meditation—the Alhambra, whose fairy courts and sparkling fountains, speak only of ease and luxury. The one, befitting temple of a faith, which preached repentance and mortification—the other, meet emblem of a people, whose creed breathes only of worldly enjoyment. Representatives of the days of monkish rule, and chivalrous adventure—types of ages, that have passed away, of classes, who have each done their allotted work in the great drama of the world—the cowled monk and the plumed knight, were each required in his day; but new ideas and new feelings are now called into action. and neither is in keeping with the requirements of the nineteenth century!

The Escorial was a grand idea to be conceived and executed by one man; it was a mighty sepulchre for the Sovereigns of a country, whose dominion was acknowledged throughout the world; and a sepulchre it became, not only of the Kings, but of their country, and Spain lies buried, as it were, within the Escorial. Philip, who prepared that mighty mausoleum, paved the way for the fall of Spain; and the proud inheritance he had received from the recluse of San Yuste, descended with diminished splendour to his son. The first thought of this edifice

arose in Philip's mind on the field of San Quentin, when the French arms were vanquished, and victory proclaimed itself for Spain. Then the monarch resolved to dedicate a temple to San Lorenzo, where by night as well as by day, hymns of praise and thankfulness should be offered before the throne of the Most High. Some say, the choice of San Lorenzo was dictated from the circumstance of the battle having been fought upon his festival; but the Padre Villacastin says, that the King was influenced by having had to raze a monastery to the ground, that was dedicated to San Lorenzo, in order the better to assault San Quentin. One of his first thoughts on returning to Spain, was to commence the undertaking, and a commission was formed to choose the site.

The situation thus selected, harmonized well with the gloomy fanaticism of the Sovereign, who sought a retreat from the world, yet not too distant from the capital of his dominions. The new monastery was offered to the followers of San Jerome, whose austere rules seemed most adapted to the ideas of the royal founder. At a chapter of the order, held in 1561, the offer was accepted; and a prior being elected, he and several friars went to reside in the village of the Escorial, a wretched and poverty-stricken place, in order that they might superintend the erection of their future habitation. The designs and erection were entrusted to Juan Bantista de Toledo, a Spanish architect, who had studied in Rome, and left evidence of his talent in the city of Naples, where among other things, the noble street which still preserves his name, bears witness to the genius now about to be exercised upon a wider field. His pupil Juan de Herrera, was shortly afterwards associated with him in the work, and lived to complete it. During the whole period of its erection, the Escorial appears never to have been absent from the mind of the monarch, amid all the important

affairs, which occupied his attention; and even when the kingdom of Portugal was added to his sway, he was busy for its adornment, while visiting his new capital on the banks of the Tagus. Had the thought of fixing his residence there occurred to him then, he might have laid the foundations for the future prosperity of his country, and benefitted her considerably more, than by squandering millions on a monastery.

The first stone was laid by Philip himself in 1563, and the last was placed upon the edifice in 1584. But much yet remained to be done, before this magnificent building could be considered as completed. Treasures of art were now to ornament its walls, and painters and sculptors, and workers in gold and silver, had to adorn this monument of a Sovereign's piety. A commission had been appointed to collect relics of all sorts and sizes, to enrich the sanctuary. The holy fathers visited every corner, where such things were likely to be collected, the relics were taken out of the old cases, in which they had been originally placed, and carefully cleaned; the bones of saints and martyrs were gilt, a piece of officiousness, which did not quite please the Sovereign, for, as the Padre Siguenza, one of the historians of the monastery says, "all the poverty, in which they were clothed, was only a faithful evidence of the purity, reverence and truth of those pious ages, in which there was so much faith, and so little money."

At length, after so many years of unremitting labour, the mighty edifice was completed; all that the wealth of a powerful monarch could collect, was united beneath this enormous roof, this true Museum of Art; and the King determined on having the last seal put to his work, by the Papal Nuncio.

Philip himself, although bending under the weight of increasing infirmities, was present. The hour of his death

was fast approaching, and he expired on the 13th of September, 1598, in the seventy-first year of his age, after having reigned forty-two years. He left nothing for his son to complete, except the Pantheon, where the ashes of the Spanish Sovereigns were to be deposited. His successor, Philip III., commenced this undertaking, and the most costly marbles were employed in its erection; but it was not until the reign of Philip IV., that it was ready for the reception of the royal coffins. Before they were transported to their final resting-place, they were opened, in order that the remains might be transferred to the sarcophagi prepared for them. It was found that the body of Charles V. was but slightly changed, after having been deposited there ninety-six years; it was not embalmed, but wrapped in a linen cloth, as he had desired in his will; and was covered with rosemary, and other aromatic herbs, which had carpeted the hills around San Yuste. Seven members of the House of Austria, were then taken to the gorgeous Pantheon, amid all the pomp and ceremony of so strange a funeral pageant; and there they rest in peace, beside those of the House of Bourbon, their successors on the throne of Spain.

In 1671, a dreadful fire nearly destroyed all that had been erected with so much labour and expense. Nothing could stay the fury of the flames; neither the exertions of the assembled multitudes, nor the prayers of the friars, who appeared bearing some of the miraculous relics which were enshrined within the temple, and which, it is said, had already proved most efficacious in similar circumstances, were of any avail; and many of the Arabic manuscripts, which enriched the library, as well as the standard taken at Lepanto, were consumed. The Escorial became a pile of blackened ruins, and the church alone remained unscathed. They succeeded, however,

in saving most of the treasures contained within the building, and by the most unwearied exertions on the part of the Prior, the damage was repaired in the course of a few years; but the prestige of the Escorial was already on the wane, and on the accession of the House of Bourbon, in the year 1700, it ceased to be the favourite retreat of the Spanish monarchs. Philip V., although possessed of that love of solitude, which had thrown a sort of gloom over the lives of some of his predecessors, preferred the pine-clad heights of San Ildefonso to the monastic seclusion of the Escorial.

The present century has sealed its ruin. Ravaged and despoiled by the French, the walls were deprived of the pictures which adorned them; the records of the learning of past ages disappeared from the shelves of the library; the golden caskets, which contained the wondrous relics, collected by its founder, were carried off; and all the costly plate and jewelled ornaments, which glittered upon the high altar, were melted down or stolen; and the matchless crucifix of Benvenuto Cellini, which was considered of such value, that Philip, to avoid its being injured in the carriage, caused it to be transported on men's shoulders from Barcelona, was thrown aside in a corner of the building, where it lay long neglected. The blow, inflicted by this wholesale pillage, has never been recovered; during the civil wars which followed, many of the pictures were removed to Madrid; and now grace the walls of the museum, ticketed with a label, "from the Escorial."

When the storm, which had long been brooding, burst upon the convents, this princely edifice was also involved in the general destruction. Its fall was delayed a little, but on St. Andrew's Day, 1837, two hundred and seventy-six years after the brotherhood had been constituted by Philip II., they were summoned to listen to the decree

announcing their final extinction. No time was allowed the inmates to make any preparation for the change which awaited them. They were told that was the last day on which they were to dine together, and that on the morrow they must seek shelter under some other roof. They were not allowed to take even their beds and scanty furniture; these were considered the property of the establishment, and as such were sold afterwards by public auction.

The building was fast crumbling to ruin until it was placed in some repair by the Queen's tutor, Arguelles, who put aside a yearly sum out of the royal patrimony for its maintenance and preservation. This arrested its destruction for a time. There are now some twenty or thirty priests who reside there to guard the ashes of the Sovereigns, and perform the requisite services in the church: but the future destiny of the Escorial is now a matter of speculation. The cowled followers of St. Jerome may once more people its deserted corridors, or its massive walls may crumble into dust amid silence and neglect.

But we must turn from such speculations to penetrate within the gloomy pile, over whose history we have thus been glancing. The greatest wonder it now possesses is the old blind guide, Cornelio, who has escorted travellers over the same unvaried round for any number of years they may choose to imagine. He walks on ahead of his party with a firm and determined step, never hesitating or faltering for a moment, quite as though he could see. He has established a regular routine of sight-seeing, from which it would be little less than high treason to diverge. The diligence leaves Madrid early, and arrives about one o'clock. You have hardly had time to see about rooms, before Cornelio arrives to take you down to the Casa del Campo, and then

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Dickinson Bros lith.

to the church, escorting you on the following morning over the remainder of the building. We followed our blind guide with implicit confidence, obeying the mandate with due submission which bade us leave the Escorial itself until the last.

We visited first a small summer-hosue, called the Casino del Principe, an expensive plaything, erected by Charles IV. when Prince of the Asturias; it is as pretty as silks and satins, and gilt furniture, and China ornaments, and second-rate pictures can make it, and contains a regular suite of apartments. It is surrounded by a pretty garden in the valley just below the convent. As we retraced our steps up the hill, we had the vast pile before us; and when the first poetry is over, and the eye begins to criticise, this huge conventional palace offers nothing in the exterior to captivate the imagination. Colossal in its dimensions, one cannot fail to admire the untiring energy and determination which succeeded in rearing so enormous a pile, but its long lines of insignificant windows appear like the exterior of a busy manufactory, or the plain elevation of a gigantic poor-house.

Wishing to avoid the over-ornamentation of the day, its architects fell into the opposite extreme, and the nakedness of the elevation considerably impairs its beauty. The building is erected in the form of a gridiron, the portion appropriated to the palace forming the handle. A broad terrace runs round two sides, and the grand entrance is towards the north, facing the mountain, and looking away from the capital. A small door leads into a grand quadrangle, called the Patio de los Reyes, from the colossal statues which adorn the façade of the church. The grand entrance is only opened for the admission of royalty, and you pass through a small side-door into the church.

When you cross the threshold, and stand beneath the archway which supports the choir, the massive grandeur of this gigantic temple strikes you with an indefinable feeling of awe. Plain and unornamented, the huge granite blocks, with which it is formed, seem as though they had been raised by some giant hand, and like the colossal pyramids of Egypt, promise to last as many centuries, a witness of the cold heart and iron will of the monarch at whose behest they were reared. Grand, indeed, is this temple, and simple as it is grand; nothing light or trivial mars the fine proportions—so perfect, that at first its size is scarcely evident—no massive choir intercepts the view, no gilded reja cuts up the nave; there in front is the high altar, raised on its throne of steps, surrounded by all the splendour that marble, and gold, and jasper can bestow: around, are the plain granite walls; below, the pavement, with its white and black chequered squares; above, the dome and vaulted roof, though its effect would have been grander without the azure colouring of Giordano's frescoes.

The church is in the form of a Greek cross, and its walls are adorned with many paintings of Navarrete, more commonly called El Mudo, whose works are not much known out of the Peninsula. He was born at Logroño in 1526; in early childhood he lost the power of speech, but grew eloquent with his pencil. He studied in Venice, and adopted much of the gorgeous colouring belonging to that school; his pictures in the Escorial are chiefly full-length figures of the Saints and Apostles.

The high altar is ascended by a flight of some seventeen or eighteen steps of costly marble; the retablo is magnificent, with rather a fiery picture of San Lorenzo on his gridiron in the centre. Close beside, on the pavement of the chapel, are the private oratories of the royal family; and here, on the epistle side, is the small alcove where the