

The houses appear small and insignificant, as they are clustered near its arches, and little their inmates appreciate that mighty monument of antiquity. One or two of the people were particularly indignant at the talbotype apparatus blocking up the streets: "How could any one wish to draw those old stones?" exclaimed one; while another, wiser than the rest, imparted to the assembled crowd that we were only taking a copy of it, in order to build something like it in our own country. One of the best views of the aqueduct is from the church of San Justo; its tower and ornamented apse forming a beautiful foreground to the picture. A pretty *détour* may be made through the valley to the San Lorenzo, a small suburb, where the river flows along over a stony bed, escaping from noisy mills, which are perched here and there amid the blocks of granite that border it. From this point the town is seen crowning the height; to the left the aqueduct joins it to the opposite hills; to the right rise the turrets of the Alcazar, its walls descending perpendicularly into the ravine beneath.

The waters of the Eresma flow joyfully along, while groups of women washing, crowd its poplar-fringed banks; one or two bridges cross it, and to the right rises the ruined convent of the Parral, formerly belonging to the order of San Jerome, which flourished so extensively in Spain. Their gardens were so celebrated, that a popular saying described them as the earthly paradise.

Enclosed in their rocky valley, they receive all the rays of the sun, and vegetation luxuriates in the shelter thus afforded. A hermitage formerly stood here, where the celebrated Juan Pacheco, Marquis de Villena, founded a convent in the year 1447. The civil wars, which ensued in the reign of Henry IV., prevented the completion of his design; it was, however, richly endowed, and became in course of years one of the most favoured possessions of

the order. But it has, of course, shared the fate of its companions. It is supposed to be most carefully guarded; some difficulty exists in seeing it, and it is necessary to apply to the governor for the keys.

This might lead one to imagine its remains were highly prized; but the man who came down to show it did not seem very particular as to his charge. In a few years it will be a heap of ruins; the grand portal of the church has already disappeared, and the interior rivals the Cartuja of Jerez in the scene of destruction it presents. The pavement is torn up, and the splendid tombs of the Villenas, its illustrious founders, have been sadly mutilated. A party of soldiers came in while we were there, and amused themselves scrambling over the monuments, and taking away some little record of their visit in the shape of a piece of sculptured marble; our guide did not seem to wish to interfere with their proceedings, and we of course had nothing to say.

On a hill, above the Parral, is a most interesting ruined church, dedicated to La Vera Cruz, built by the Templars in 1204. The keys are intrusted to the same watchful hands as those of the Parral. This temple was formerly used as the parish church of Zamaramala, a village at a little distance; but now it has fallen into disuse. It is of an octagonal form, with two very pretty entrances like our Norman gateways with zigzag mouldings, and has a square tower, the interior of which is very curious. The crosses of the knight are set round in the wall, and in the centre is an inner chapel, very low, and consisting of two stories; to the upper one of which you ascend by a flight of steps, and a tomb is there preserved, said to be an imitation of the Holy Sepulchre, but the resemblance did not strike us very forcibly. This chapel ought to be preserved as an interesting monument, from its singularity.

Below the Vera Cruz, in the valley, is the convent of the Virgin de la Fuencisla, where an image of the Virgin, dressed in all the splendour that can be lavished on such objects, is held in most especial veneration by the inhabitants of Segovia. The building itself leans against the overhanging cliff; some of the steps are cut in the solid rock which also serves as a roof to the staircase. The convent is in good preservation, but it does not contain anything remarkable, being indebted for its preservation not to its artistic merit, but to its favourite shrine. From the platform in front, the view of the Alcazar is very fine, as it stands out crowning the point of the cliff, although its general effect is much injured by its grey-slated roofs. It terminates a bold promontory, at whose base a small stream falls into the Eresma, which continues its unquiet course, foaming and rushing along between precipitous banks.

Crossing one of the bridges, you climb the heights on which the Alcazar stands, rather a steep ascent. In front is the lofty tower of the San Esteban, with its rows of arches and quaint architecture. All these Segovian churches are in the same style; their great peculiarity consists in having a corridor along one, or perhaps two sides, the arches supported by double columns, and highly decorated capitals. Along the cornice runs a rich border of tiny arches, with varied corbels, and quaint heads filling up the interstices. Some churches are more ornamented than others, but all bear the same stamp. One of the most picturesque is the San Juan, now converted into a house of refuge for the distressed pictures which are not considered worthy of a place in the museum, where have been assembled the contents of the deceased convents. The portal of this church is more enriched than the generality, perhaps it is of rather a later period; and although the corridor has been

blocked up, it makes a charming picture with its low square tower.

In the Plaza San Martin are façades of old mansions, now turned into shops, while the windows above bear witness to former splendour; and a tall square tower, belonging to the house of the Marquis de Lozoya, attracts attention. Some modern houses, painted in all the grandeur that the brightest ultramarine can confer, disfigure an adjoining street, but these are considered triumphs of taste of the present inhabitants, and an evidence of what rapid strides to improvement their city is making. There is scarcely a street that does not present some object which delights the eye from its originality; and to any one fond of drawing, Segovia affords a wide field for the pencil. Those who are tired of the Norman architecture of the churches may pay the nuns of the Corpus a visit, and look at their chapel, unmistakably of Moorish origin, or in imitation of Moorish work. Horse-shoe arches, supported by extraordinary capitals, and short thick columns, divide the aisles, while above in the nave runs a long row of Moorish arches and stucco arabesques; all spoiled, of course, by whitewash, thickly laid on. The girl, who did the honours, was very anxious that we should read the history of a miracle which had been performed there in 1410; but we were hurried, and to her surprise preferred looking at the Moorish work. There is only one thing resembling this church, and that is the old synagogue of Santa Maria La Blanca at Toledo, which contains capitals of the same strange form.

We were particularly pleased with the cathedral, which, although small, is beautiful, and the more surprised, from not having heard much of it previously. There is a great deal to admire in the interior, combining, as it does, lightness with grandeur. The choir

and rejas are there, but do not injure the effect so much as in many others. The colour of the stone gives a rich deep tone to the whole building, which is considerably increased by the lovely pavement, with its diamonds of black, white, and salmon-coloured marbles, windows of rich-painted glass completing the edifice. The iron screens are magnificent, and all correspond—an unusual occurrence, which materially contributes to the beauty of the whole.

As the eye follows the lines of columns, it rests on the exquisitely moulded ribs of the groining which interlace each other, covering the vaulted roof with a network of tracery, most tastefully arranged. This cathedral is uninjured by whitewash, or any other vandalism of modern days; and in the interior, for a wonder, there is nothing over which to lament. In a hall, leading from them, the Custodia is kept on a sort of triumphal car, and in the centre stands the tomb of a son of Henry II., who was killed by falling out of the Alcazar window. The sala capitular has a splendid white and gold ceiling. The exterior of the cathedral does not equal the interior; it stands in a very awkward manner near the Plaza, and from thence the highly decorated pinnacles, which abound in the east end, give promise of a richly worked façade, but it is as plain as possible, without the slightest attempt at ornament.

Segovia suffered much during the wars of the Comuneros, when the Castilians, discontented with the conduct of Charles V. and his Flemish councillors, made a desperate struggle for the maintenance of their liberties. The Alcazar was one of the strongholds which resisted their encroachments, and by some most especial favour it has been spared alike from the ravages of war, or the steady and slow decay of time, and it remains still a most interesting record of former days. The grand entrance

tower, with its small turrets, is very imposing ; it is now converted into an artillery college, and is kept in most perfect order. The suite of state apartments is quite magnificent. The artesonado ceilings are splendid specimens of that rich and singular mixture of Gothic and Moorish taste, which is so prevalent in Spain. All vary in design, each exceeding the other in richness, and the gilding looks as fresh as though it had been laid on but yesterday.

These rooms were decked out in all this splendour in the time of Henry IV., and one hall, now used as the library, has a frieze decorated with statues of all the Spanish monarchs down to Philip II. The situation of this Alcazar is very grand as you look down upon the cheerful valley beneath, but the view over the country is dreary enough, nothing but barren stony hills. All the portion devoted to the students is very well arranged, and a long gallery covered in with glass is appropriated to the use of the drawing classes. Nothing could be more civil than the soldier who did the honours, neither did he make—which somewhat surprised us—the slightest objection to Mr. T. placing his camera inside the railings to take a view ; on the contrary, he seemed much interested in the proceedings, and was most anxious to have a portrait taken of himself.

Some of the gates of the town are very picturesque, particularly that of San Andrés, which is by far the finest. It is a massive portal, flanked by towers of solid masonry ; but the battlemented parapet is partly ruined, and the whole structure much dilapidated. The cold in Segovia is intense in winter, and while we were there the snow fell thick, covering the ground, and resting on the roofs of the houses. It was very provoking, more particularly on St. Andrew's Day, for it prevented our seeing a grand fête held by the country people on that festival,

when they all assemble in the small Plaza, just within the gate of San Andrés. There is an old tree in the centre, round which they dance. I regretted it, especially at Segovia, where the peasant women have more character in their costume than in other towns. They all wear cloth jackets and bright yellow petticoats; the upper one is generally made of red stuff, edged with a broad green border, which they turn over their heads like a mantilla, the bright colours giving them a gayer appearance than usual, and the high-peaked hats are still worn by the men.

Altogether we were charmed with Segovia; the beautiful cathedral, the well-preserved halls of its Alcazar, the lofty towers and open arcades of the churches, which are perfect studies for the ecclesiologist, and the grand arches of its aqueduct towering above the gable ends of the houses with their wooden balconies, all form so many objects of interest, and combine to lend a peculiar attraction to this town.

We were told we should find wretched accommodation, but we were agreeably surprised at the inn where we stopped, near the large Plaza, for although the cuisine was not first-rate, we had one of the best rooms we had met with on our journey. Large, with two nice alcoves, it was more tidily furnished than usual, and the prices were much lower than in other places. We now bade adieu to Segovia, where we could have lingered much longer, had it been in a more genial season; and retracing our steps over the pass of the Navacerrada, with its pine forests, we reached Madrid in eleven hours. This is a splendid road, having been constructed not so much for the advantage of Segovia, as for the easier conveyance of royalty backwards and forwards to their alpine palace of La Granja.

Descending from the chain of the Guadarrama, you change horses at a wretched village called Las Rosas, a

bitter mockery to give such a name to a place where no plants of any description seem to grow. Bleak and wretched is the entire province, although the presence of some of the royal country palaces imparts more verdure as you approach the capital in this direction, than is seen on any other side. The palace of Madrid, occupying the commanding position it does, forms a fine object. But a by no means pleasing approach is presented in the bed of the Manzanares, whose stream is turned to account as a large wash-house for Madrid. The banks of the river are fringed, not with overshadowing trees, but with long lines of clothes hanging out to dry. Such an exhibition of the garments of a whole population was never seen, as is here displayed to the admiring gaze of the traveller, while hundreds of women are bending over the water beating and scrubbing away from morning till night. It certainly does not form an imposing entrance to a capital.

On our return to Madrid, we found everybody busily engaged in speculating on the approaching meeting of the Cortes; there were mysterious conversations, rumours of a coup-d'état, reports of some plots the Government were laying against the liberties of the country; in fact, all people agreed that something was to be done; the difficulty lay in ascertaining what that something really was to be. It was necessary that the outward semblance of the Constitution should be adhered to; this required that the Cortes should meet every year, and consequently the Parliament was convoked on the very last day the law permitted. During the lengthened recess the business of the country had been transacted by royal decrees; a more convenient and much less troublesome mode of carrying on the Government than submitting measures for discussion to a refractory Congress, and more economical than bribing deputies to secure their votes.

The important day at length arrived, and the Cortes were opened by commission, the Queen not attending in person. Business had scarcely commenced, when the government sustained a signal defeat in the election of Martinez de la Rosa, as President of the Lower House. Every one was now on the *qui vive*, to know what would follow; and each person, as is usual on such occasions, appeared to know more than his neighbour, while ominous shakes of the head, and most significant shrugs of the shoulder, concealed the little they really did know in the most approved manner. Some entertained fears of an *émeute*, and cautiously sent out to know if all was quiet in the streets, before they proceeded to the theatre, or their evening amusements; while others came to the very wise conclusion, that time would dispel the mysterious veil in which things were shrouded. On the following day, all who were fortunate enough to gain admission, flocked to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, to be present at the grand *dénouement*. We joined the throng, who were hurrying to the former.

The Cortes of Spain, according to the arrangements of 1837, consists of two houses, the *Senado*, and the *Congreso de los Diputados*. The latter, are only elected for three years, and can, of course, be dissolved at the pleasure of the Sovereign; but they are obliged to reassemble within three months after the dissolution. The elections are almost always in favour of the government, and are carried on by ballot, which, however, does not contribute either to prevent bribery or intimidation, both being practised to a most extensive degree; for through the immense number of employés, which abound everywhere, ministers possess an overpowering influence, and they exercise it most unblushingly. Nothing can be quieter than the elections; there are no meetings in public, no hustings, where candidates have to win the sweet voices

of their constituents, no cheering, no colours, no enthusiasm; people walk into a room, prepared for the purpose, and deposit slips of paper in the urns, the votes having been given apparently in secret; but, notwithstanding, the result of each is as well known as if all had been done openly and in public.

At the end of the second day, the numbers are counted, and the result is proclaimed; but the fortunate candidates have no opportunity of returning thanks to the free and independent electors, who have placed them in the proud position they occupy; nor even can they make any solemn assertions or declarations, how untiringly they intend to devote themselves to their interests, and merit the honour which has been conferred on them. Nothing of all this awaits the member, who has been returned to the Spanish House of Commons. He seems to have no peculiar privilege, except that should he be absent from the capital at the time the House meets, he has the power of usurping the place of any person, who may have engaged a seat for Madrid in the diligence, or the malle-poste, and occupying it himself, in order that the House may not be deprived of his valuable services.

The members of the Upper House are nominated by the Sovereign; they are only for life; the Senate consists now of upwards of three hundred members. A senator here does not convey the same idea that a member of the House of Lords does with us; he has not necessarily a title—on the contrary, the great majority have none. There are some *grandees* who are senators, and many “*titulos del reina*,” as they call those titles, whose bearers have not the honour of remaining covered in the presence of the Sovereign. The army, the church, the law, and the navy are represented in the Senate, the military having considerably the majority. The members of the cabinet have seats in both houses, sometimes attending one,

sometimes the other, according to the importance of the business which has to be transacted, but they can only vote in the one to which they belong. The Senate hold their meetings in the old convent of Doña Maria de Aragon, in the plaza of the same name; the church has been converted into the hall of assembly, which is a very handsome room, simply arranged, and seems to be very well adapted to its present purpose. There are several galleries for spectators; the Queen's throne occupies the place where formerly stood the high altar; it is on a raised platform, and in front of it are the chairs and desks of the presidents and secretaries, also the tribune, whence the members speak. Benches run down both sides, and each is provided with a comfortable writing-desk. The senators enter by two side doors, the grand centre one facing the throne, being reserved for the Sovereign. They have a very good library, and sundry committee-rooms.

The day on which we went, all the tribunes were crowded, and an unusually full attendance proclaimed the interest that was felt. There was some delay beyond the appointed hour; but at length the members of the government entered, and the appearance of Bravo Murillo in full uniform announced that he was the bearer of a royal message. One of the secretaries then read a long list of unimportant business, when Bravo Murillo ascended the tribune, and read the decree dissolving the Cortes, and convoking them for the 1st of March. "Vaya V^a con Dios," we all rose, and so ended this long session of 1852, which had only lasted twenty-four hours.

Bravo Murillo is not a very distingüé looking person. He was a lawyer, a native of an obscure town in Estremadura, and studied for some years at Seville in the College of the Felipenses, where he is said to have imbibed that leaning towards the clergy which charac-

