

by an old castle, called the Calahorra. The view just beyond, looking back on the town, is extremely pretty; but it has a lonely and deserted appearance. There is a promenade along the banks of the river, but the inhabitants prefer walking in a small plaza, near one of the city gates, or else on a esplanade, which has lately been formed above the bridge.

In this square is a very pretty tower belonging to the Church of San Nicolas. It has inscribed on it in large letters *Paciencia Obedencia*. This is said to have been done by way of a gentle reproof to the inmates of the convent of San Martin, which formerly existed on the spot now occupied by the square. It seems they objected to this church being erected so close opposite to them, as it would impede the prospect they then enjoyed; but their remonstrances were of no avail, and when the tower was completed, the words enjoining patience and obedience were placed upon its walls, that they might always have before their eyes, what it was so advisable they should practise.

One lovely evening we were seated on the benches in the plaza, and the promenade was crowded with gay and idle loungers, when the Angelus sounded on the stillness of the air, and instantly every head was uncovered until the echo had died away, and the appointed prayer was uttered. This custom, once so general, is now almost obsolete, and this was the only time we ever noticed it during the whole of our lengthened stay in the country.

Cordoba does not appear rich in equipages, as far as carriages for hire are concerned; there were but two in the town, and those two were never to be had during the whole of our stay. We saw one or two four-in-hands, but the liveries were not quite in character with the number of the horses, and the coachman who was

driving one of them, had made himself comfortable by taking off his jacket. It is quite a penance to walk in the streets of Cordoba; they are so wretchedly paved, and driving, of course, must be still worse, unless the springs are better than they are generally in Spanish vehicles. At night, too, they are not particularly well lighted, the small lamps, burning before the shrines of saints, constituting the principal medium of illumination.

There is but little to see in the town itself, after a pilgrimage to the mosque has been made. We went to visit the gardens of the old Alcázar, where a few plants still flourish, and beside them rise the tall towers once inhabited by the Inquisition, now occupied as a prison.

Just outside the walls, is the cemetery—the best kept that I have seen in Spain. The coffins are placed, according to the general practice, in niches round the wall; but all have ornamented tablets, some with very poetical inscriptions, and all most carefully attended to. A small chapel, with a residence for one or two of the clergy, who have the charge of it, forms the entrance; and one of them, who really seemed to take a pride in it, showed us over the whole. Nothing could exceed the neatness of the gardens, of the rooms in the house, and the two pretty courts on each side of the church. It was laid out in 1834, on the ground belonging to the ancient hermitage of the Virgen de la Salud, to whom it is dedicated. Her image is placed over the high altar, and my companion told me it had been discovered, on that spot, about four hundred years ago, enclosed in a leaden case, having probably been thus concealed while the Moors were in possession of the city. Altogether, this Campo Santo is quite a model that might be imitated to advantage in other Spanish towns.

Some portions of the walls are extremely picturesque, and the towers and gateways are in very good preservation; but the dust renders a walk round them anything but a pleasant undertaking. The great charm of this place lies in the beautiful rides which abound in the neighbourhood. Clothed with the most magnificent verdure, the Sierra Morena presents quite a novel attraction in Spanish scenery, being covered with cortijos, where people reside for two or three months in the spring, and enjoy the charming scenery around. They see a great deal of society likewise, and their friends from the town spend the day with them, and dance under the shadow of the orange-groves. Most of the noble and wealthy families have here their country-houses, some of which are very handsomely furnished, and the tall and feathering palms that overshadow them recall the fact that here this graceful tree was first cultivated, on its introduction into Spain.

There is a charming villa called Arrizafa, a short distance from the town, belonging to the landlord of the hotel, where his guests may stay if they prefer it; and after you have passed this and approach the mountains, the scenery increases in beauty. Here the carob grows into a forest tree, the scraggy branches of the evergreen oak twist across the paths, and the ground is covered with plants of the many-coloured cistus. Myrtles and multitudes of shrubs laden with bright blossoms, and groves of chesnuts and pines vary the scene; and one of the highest peaks is dotted with white houses, dwellings of lonely anchorites, known by the name of the Ermitas.

The site is well chosen; it commands the whole Campiña, as the flat country round Cordoba is called, from the castle-crowned rock of Almodovar to the distant peaks of the snowy mountains, while the broad river

meanders through the plains. The hermitages are surrounded by a low wall, and once within the enclosure you ascend to the principal house occupied by the Hermano Mayor, where there is a small chapel sufficiently capacious for the brethren. One or two portraits hanging upon the wall of an adjoining room, preserve the recollection of the members of some distinguished Cordobese families, who have ended their days in the seclusion of this retreat. Here the knights of old came to expiate lives misspent amid the din and turmoil of the world—some perhaps moved by feelings of true repentance, although a favourite Spanish proverb would put a less religious construction on their motives, for it says: “When the wolf can find no more sheep to eat, he turns friar.”

The Hermano Mayor had entered the Ermitas at the age of eighteen, and he now numbered seventy-eight years. For sixty years he had dwelt there apart from all the changing events of the world. Each hermit has a tiny house, containing one room with two alcoves; one for his oratory, the other for sleeping. Every house has a small garden round it, whose walls are trellised with vines, their purple bunches hanging in rich luxuriance. They live upon the produce of the ground they cultivate, and the charity of their neighbours; and one member of the community goes every month to Cordoba to beg. A pleasant idle life, well suited to those who delight in doing nothing, sanctified as it is, under the garb of religion.

One of the hermits was a most original character; he was a jolly-looking old man, and seemed delighted at the opportunity of talking about the world he had abandoned. He made us sit down while he related his history, heedless of the additional penance he would doubtless have to perform for indulging in such mundane conversation. He had been a colonel in the army, and served during

the war of independence; after the conclusion of which he travelled in France for three or four years. He said he had seen enough of the world, for he had tried it in all its phases. He married, and had an only child, but in 1832 both his wife and daughter were carried off by fever on the same day; and shortly after, disgusted with everything, he threw up his retiring pension of one hundred and forty pounds a year, and withdrew to the desert of Cordoba. He had, however, mistaken his vocation. He spoke in no terms of admiration of his *Rosarios* and *Oraciones*, which he seemed to consider great nonsense; and I have no doubt before long he will return to the world he has forsaken. Our friend was very amusing, but he rather destroyed the poetry of the scene: the situation is far more romantic than the inmates, for the most vivid imagination would have found it difficult to conjure up anything even bordering on the sentimental out of the hermits themselves.

Many a lovely ride may be taken from the *Ermitas* into the very heart of the *Sierra* through the pine forests; and as you cross the vast olive-yards, you see the ground covered with beautiful garden-roses, which were once cultivated here to a great extent. Even the Arab historians dilate upon the celebrity Cordoba had obtained for the abundance of its roses. The *Sierra Morena* is rich in mineral wealth: it contains an immense coal-field, the produce of which is very good; but there are no roads or means of transport, except on mules or horses, and the expense attendant on raising the coal, and carrying it, is consequently very great. The famous quicksilver mines of *Almaden* are well known, and the lead ore, which abounds, is of very superior quality. Some charming excursions might be made in this *Sierra*, and many picturesque villages, crowned with old castles, are dotted about amid the forests. On the slopes of one of the

hills, looking over the Campiña, stands one of those princely monasteries formerly occupied by the followers of St. Jerome; it is needless to add that it is now a mere heap of ruins. It lies embosomed in orange-groves, surrounded by luxuriant olives and evergreen oaks, and now forms a most convenient resort for parties of pleasure from Cordoba, who dine in the old refectory of the fathers, making the walls re-echo to many a merry laugh and joyous conversation. Just below in the valley, may be seen a large wall enclosing a considerable portion of ground; it presents as uninviting an appearance as can well be imagined, and yet the piece of ground within that ruined wall is said to have been once covered with magnificent buildings. The account given by eastern writers of the splendid city and palace of Az-zahrá savour much of the tales of fairy-land. Yet making due allowance for eastern hyperbole, there is no doubt that it must have been a wondrous place. "Praise be to God," exclaims the Arab historian, "who allowed those contemptible creatures to design and build such enchanting palaces as these!" The palaces of Az-zahrá have crumbled into dust, and thus the works of man pass away, and the creations of his hand; the teeming earth and the azure sky alone remain unchanged.

Cordoba is now deserted and abandoned, not a trace exists of the city of Az-zahrá: the roses bloom unheeded on the slopes of the Sierra, and the country formed to be a paradise is left neglected by the hand of man; still, there are sounds of life and activity beginning to be heard around, and engineers may be seen at work preparing to lay down their iron roads to connect the cities of Cordoba and Seville. The whistle of the steam-engine will yet rouse the slumbering valleys, and the smoke of the locomotive curl in wreathed clouds over the plain.

The journey of twenty-four hours over the dreary and sandy road, which lies between Cordoba and Seville, will soon be shortened; but Ecija, the abode of many a proud and noble family, and Carmona, with its beautiful situation, and lofty tower, which aspires to imitate the Giralda, will no longer receive even a cursory visit, as the line of railway follows the course of the river, and reaches Seville by a speedier and more convenient route. Many a long day must elapse before we can dispense with the heavy lumbering diligence; we must still avail ourselves of it to return to the capital of Andaluca, whither we retraced our steps before bidding farewell to the Peninsula.

It is much to be regretted, that there should be so few attractions, in a social point of view, to induce foreigners to settle in Seville. The climate is charming, the city contains many interesting monuments, it is easy of access, the surrounding country is clothed with luxuriant vegetation, and is in many places picturesque; living, although much dearer than in other Spanish towns, is not expensive; but then, there is no society to lend its aid in making time pass agreeably, no libraries, no fresh supplies of books and publications to instruct or amuse the mind—none of those numerous resources which, not cities merely, but even provincial towns, might be expected to afford.

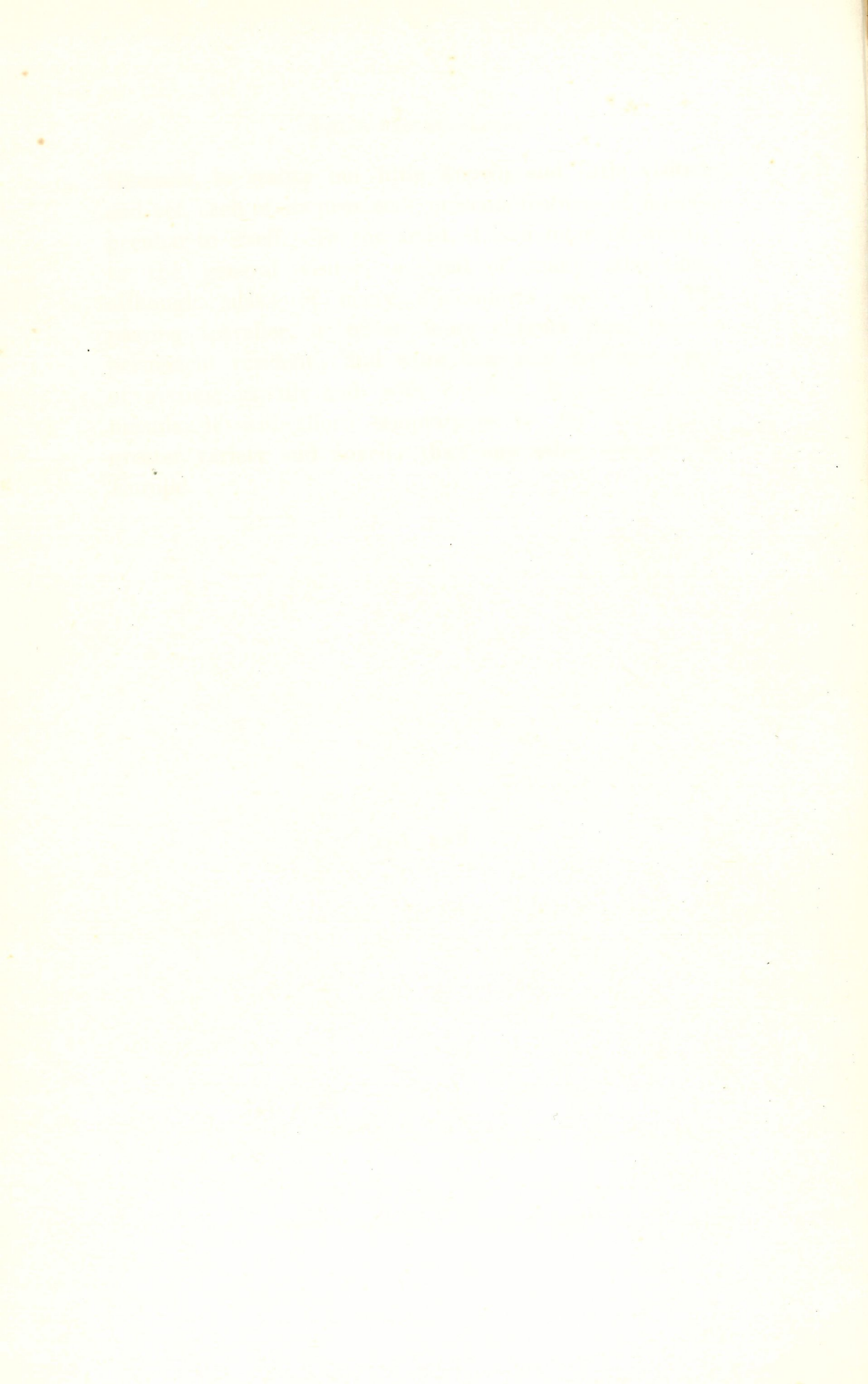
Spain has ever had for me a peculiar fascination. I dwelt with pleasure on the history of her people, and longed to visit the land over which such a halo of romance had been thrown. A residence in the country has in a great measure dispelled the vision in which imagination had indulged. I have found it neither so interesting as I pictured it, nor so common-place as some would make the world believe. Much as has been written of Spain, it is, with the exception of Seville and

Granada, in reality but little known and little visited; and yet, each of its provinces presents features of interest peculiar to itself. To the artist, it is a mine of wealth; to the general visitor, a land of many attractions, although, alas! of many discomforts also. To the passing traveller, it offers more charms than to the permanent resident; and when increased facilities exist of getting rapidly and with comfort through the Peninsula, it will afford temptations to the tourist of greater variety and novelty than any other country in Europe.

THE END.

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