

Cuando mios infaustos hados,  
 Y de Al. Abas la fiereza  
 Mi forzaron de dexar  
 Del alma las dulces prendas ;  
 A ti de mi patria amada  
 Ningun recuerda ti queda ;  
 Pero io, triste, no puedo  
 Dexar de llorar por ella.

It is probable that on the occasion of the surrender of Cordova to Ferdinand the Third, the Moors destroyed their palace of Azarah, since they were desirous of acting in a similar manner at Seville, with regard to Geber's Tower. Perhaps from disgust at the idea that a monument, the beauty and grandeur of which had inspired them with a sort of affection, would be, being gazed at, trodden, and possibly disfigured, (as it turned out) by those whom they looked upon as barbarians, and who would not appreciate its perfection, they attempted to introduce a clause into the conditions of the surrender of Seville, stipulating the destruction of the tower.

By way of testifying to the accuracy of the opinion they had formed of their adversaries, Saint Ferdinand was on the point of agreeing to the clause: when his son, afterwards his successor, Alonso el Sabio, perhaps the only Christian present, who felt sufficient interest in a square mass of masonry, to care how the question was decided,

energetically interfered, affirming that a single brick displaced, should be paid with the lives of the whole population.

This most perfect scientific monument left by the Arabs, for the possession of which, after the architect, Europe is indebted to Alonso the Tenth, we will presently examine, together with the cathedral, which was afterwards erected, so as to include it in his plan.

## LETTER XIX

## CATHEDRAL OF SEVILLE.

Seville.

WE have visited the most beautiful edifice in Seville; we are now approaching the most magnificent. The native writers, participating somewhat in the character attributed to the inhabitants of their province, sometimes called the Gascony of Spain, declare this cathedral to be the grandest in the world. This is going too far; setting aside St. Peter's, and the Santa Maria del Fiore, the style of which renders the comparison more difficult, the Duomo of Milan, of which this building appears to be an imitation, must be allowed to be superior to it, externally at least, if not internally. Had they ranked it as the finest church out of Italy, they would not have been much in error, for such it probably is.

No one in approaching, excepting from the west, would imagine it to be a Gothic edifice. You perceive an immense quadrangular enclosure, filled apparently

with cupolas, towers, pinnacles of all sorts and styles, but less of the Gothic than any other. These belong to the numerous accessory buildings, subsequently annexed to the church; such as sacristies, chapels, chapter-hall, each subsequent erection having been designed in a different style. The cathedral is inaccessible on the south side, that which we first reach in coming from the Alcazar. It is enclosed here within a long Italian façade of about thirty to forty feet elevation, ornamented by a row of Ionic pilasters, supporting an elegant frieze and balustrade. We therefore ascend the raised pavement, which, bounded by a series of antique shafts of columns, surrounds the whole enclosure; and having passed down the greater part of the east end, find a small portal close to the Giralda, which admits to the church through the court of orange-trees. Before we enter, we will look round on this view, which possesses more of the Moorish character, than that which awaits us in the interior. Some idea of the general plan of these buildings will be necessary, in order that you may perfectly understand our present point of view.

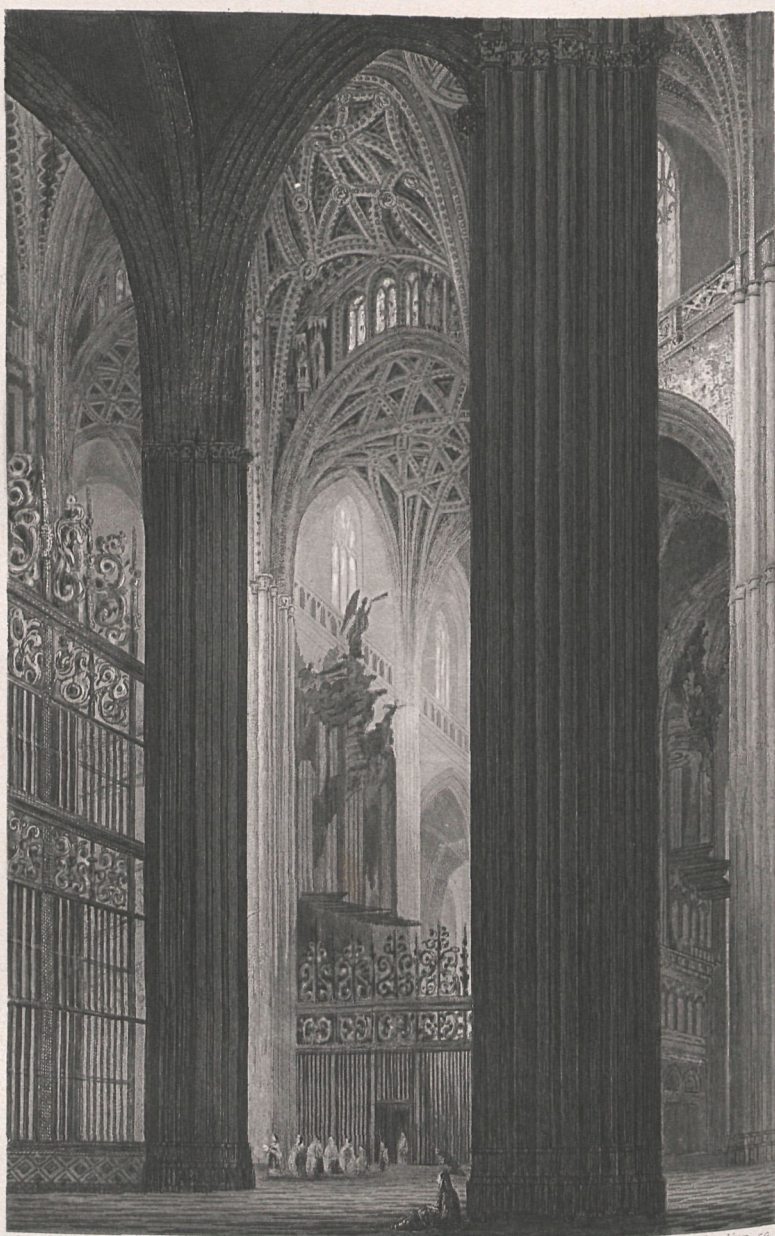
I mentioned above, that the general enclosure formed a square. This square, the sides of which face the four points of the compass, is divided by a straight line into two unequal parts, one being about

a third wider than the other. The direction of the line is east and west; to the south of it is the cathedral, to the north, the Moorish court of orange-trees. The Arab Tower, now called the Giralda, stands in the north-east angle of the cathedral, and the small door, through which we have just entered, in the south-eastern angle of the court, is close by it.

The court is surrounded by buildings; for besides the church on its south side, a chapel called the Sagrario, runs down the entire western end. The east side and half the north are occupied by arcades, which support the library, the gift of the son of Columbus to the cathedral; and the remaining half side by a sacristy. The buildings of the east and north sides lean against the old embattled wall on the outside. The chapel of the Sagrario to the west is in the Italian style. Avenues of orange-trees, and a marble fountain of a simple but choice design, are the only objects which occupy the open space. Throughout it reigns an eternal gloom, maintained by the frowning buttresses and pinnacles of the cathedral, which overhang it from the south.

A small doorway, near to that by which we entered the court, gives access to the cathedral at all hours. On entering an almost more than twilight





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INTERIOR OF THE CATHEDRAL, SEVILLE.

would confuse the surrounding objects, did it immediately succeed the sunshine of Andalusia; and were not the transition rendered gradual to the eye by the deep shades of the orange court. As you advance towards the centre nave, this darkness aids in producing the effect of immensity, which is the next idea that presents itself. In fact the enormous elevation and width of the edifice is such as at first to overpower the imagination, and to deprive you of the faculty of appreciating its dimensions. It produces a novel species of giddiness arising from looking upwards.

To arrive at the intersection of the principal nave and transept, you traverse two side naves, both about eighty-five feet in height, and spacious in proportion. The centre nave is a hundred and thirty-two feet, but rises at the quadrangle, forming its intersection with the transept about twenty feet higher. The ceiling here, and over the four surrounding intercolumniations, is ornamented with a groining of admirable richness. That of the centre quadrangle is here and there tinged with crimson and orange tints, proceeding from some diminutive windows placed between the lower and upper ceilings.

After having sufficiently examined the upper view, the eye wanders over the immense vacuum of the



transept, and rests at length on the bronze railings which, on the east, separate you from the high-altar, and on the west from the choir. These are superb.

That of the *Capilla Mayor* rises to an elevation of sixty feet, and is throughout of the most elaborate workmanship. It is the work of a Dominican monk, who also executed the two pulpits. The choir forms, as usual, a sort of saloon, which occupies the centre of the church, that is, in this instance, two of the five intercolumniations which reach from the transept to the western portal. Passing round it, in the direction of the western doors, where the view is more open, the plan and style of the building are more easily distinguished. They are remarkably simple. The area is a quadrangle of three hundred and ninety-eight feet by two hundred and ninety-one, and is divided into five naves by four rows of pillars, all of about sixty feet elevation. The width of the centre nave and transept is fifty-nine feet, and the whole is surrounded by chapels. The distance between the pillars, of which there are only eight in each row, has the effect of generalizing the view of the whole edifice, and imparting to it a grandeur which is not obtained in the cathedral of Toledo, of almost equal dimensions; while the smaller and less gaudily coloured windows shed a more religious ray, and are preferable to those of

Toledo, which, magnificent in themselves, attract an undue share of the observation, instead of blending into one perfect composition of architectural harmony.

Immediately above the arches of the principal nave and transept, at a height of about ninety feet, runs a balustrade, the design of which consists of a series of pointed arches. Above it are the windows, reaching nearly to the ceiling. They are painted in rather dark tints, and afford no more than a sort of *demi-jour*, which at the east end decreases to twilight. Rather more light is admitted towards the western extremity, from some windows of plain glass, in the lateral chapels, without which the pictures they contain could not be viewed; but from this end the high-altar is scarcely discernible. The simple grandeur of this view loses nothing by the absence of all ornamental detail: the portion most ornamented is the pavement, composed of a mosaic of the richest marbles. About half-way between the portals and the choir, are inserted two or three large slabs, bearing inscriptions; one of them is to the memory of Christopher Columbus; another to his son. There are no other details to draw the attention until we visit the chapels, in which all the treasures of art are dispersed. A few pictures are scattered here and there around

the eastern part of the building; all of them are good. A large one of Zurbaran, in the north transept, is a master-piece. It represents St. Jerome, surrounded by an assembly of monks.

At the west end of the northernmost nave, the first door opens to a vast church, called the chapel of the Sagrario, already alluded to as forming the western boundary of the orange-court. It is nearly two hundred feet in length; in the Italian style; the orders Doric and Ionic, but loaded with heavy sculpture in the worst taste. After this a series of chapels, of a style analogous to the body of the edifice, succeed each other, commencing with that of San Antonio, and continuing all round the church. Several of them contain beautiful details of ornament, and handsome tombs. That of the Kings should be mentioned as an exception, with regard to the architecture, since its style is the *plateresco*. It contains the tombs of Alonzo the Tenth, and his Queen Beatrix, with several others. The most beautiful of these chapels is that of Nuestra Señora la Antigua, situated on the south side, below the transept. It forms a square of about thirty feet, and rises to an elevation of upwards of eighty. The walls are divided into stories and compartments, and covered, as is also the ceiling, with admirable frescos by Martinez and Rovera.

At a side door leading to the sacristy, are two beautiful columns of *verde antico*. The high-altar is composed of jasper, from quarries which existed at the distance of a few leagues from Seville. The statues are by Pedro Cornejo; and there are handsome tombs let into the lower part of the walls. Four antique chandeliers, one in each corner, are designed with uncommon grace and originality. From the summit of a short column rises a silver stem, from different parts of which spring flat rods of the same metal, so slight as to bend with the smallest weight: they are of various lengths, and at the extremity of each waves an elegantly formed lamp. Each of these clusters assumes a pyramidal form, and produces a charming effect when lighted up on days of ceremony,—from their harmonizing with the rest of the decorations of the chapel, no less than from the elegance of their form.

Some of the chapels of this side, and east of the transept, communicate with other buildings, erected subsequently to the principal edifice, and consequently not comprised in its plan, nor analogous to its style. Thus, after passing through the chapel called *Del Mariscal*, situated at the south-east of the apse, you enter an anteroom, which leads to the chapter-hall. The anteroom is an apartment

of handsome proportions, covered, in the intervals of a row of Ionic pilasters, with a series of pieces of sculpture in white marble. The hall itself is magnificent. It is an oval of fifty-seven feet in length, entirely hung with crimson velvet enriched with gold embroidery. Another of the side chapels leads to the smaller sacristy. I call it smaller because it is not so large as that which adjoins the orange-court; but it is the principal of the two. It is a superb saloon, upwards of seventy feet in length by about sixty wide, ornamented with a profusion of rich sculpture. The architect was Juan de Herrera.

From the floor to a height of about four feet, a spacious wardrobe, composed of large mahogany drawers, runs down the two longer sides of the room. These contain probably the richest collection that exists of gold and silver embroidered velvets and silks,—brocades—lace—scarfs and mantles ornamented with precious stones: all these are the ornaments belonging to altars and pulpits; robes, trains, and vestures of different sorts, worn on occasions of ceremony by the principal dignitaries. The cathedral of Seville is said to surpass all others in these ornaments.

In this sacristy are contained likewise the treasure of gold and silver vessels, and basins; innumerable

crosses, reliquaries, chalices, boxes, and candlesticks ; and, in an upright mahogany case of about twenty feet elevation, lined with white silk, the front of which opens like a door, stands the Custodia—a silver ornament about sixteen feet high, including its base. On the day of the Corpus Christi, the Host is placed in this Custodia, and carried in procession through Seville. The silver of which it is composed weighs seven hundred weight. But it must not be supposed from this circumstance that the ornament has a heavy appearance. It is a tapering edifice containing four stories, ornamented by as many orders of architecture. The general form is circular, diminishing up to the summit, which supports a single statue. Each story rests on twenty-four columns, most of which are fluted, and all, together with their capitals, remarkable for their delicacy of finish. Among these are numerous statues of saints, in whose costumes precious stones are introduced. In that of the statue of Faith, which stands in the centre of the lower story, are some of immense value. This ornament was the work of Juan de Arfe, the Cellini of Spain.

But the pictures are the richest treasure of this apartment. It is an epitome of the Cathedral, which may be called a gallery—one of the richest that exists—of the paintings of Spanish schools : conse-