

quently, according to the opinion of many—one of the best of all galleries. The pictures are not in great numbers, but they are well adapted to their situation, being the largest in dimension, and among the most prominent in value and merit, that have been produced by their respective painters.

By the greater portion of spectators, the Spanish artists, of what may be called the golden age of painting, will always be preferred to the Italian; because their manner of treating their subject, appeals rather to the passions than to the understanding. It is the same quality which renders the Venetian school more popular than the other schools of Italy; and the Italian music more attractive than the German—Rossini than Spohr or Beethoven. I do not mean that the preference will be the result of choice, in an individual who appreciates the two styles perfectly; but that the difference I allude to renders the works of the greatest masters of Italy less easily understood.

With all the intelligence and taste necessary for the appreciation of a picture of Raffaele, many will have had a hundred opportunities of studying such a picture, and will nevertheless have passed it by, scarcely noticed; merely, because on the first occasion of seeing it, they have not immediately caught the idea of the artist, nor entered

sufficiently into his feelings to trace the sparks of his inspiration scattered over the canvass. How many are there too careless to return to the charge, and thus to acquire the cultivation necessary to enable them to judge of such works, who the moment a Murillo, or a Zurbaran meets their view, will gaze on it with delight, for the simple reason, that it is calculated to strike the intelligence the least cultivated.

The Spanish artists usually endeavoured to produce an exact imitation of material nature; while the Italians aimed at, and attained higher results. The object of the Spaniards being less difficult of attainment, the perfection with which they imitated nature passes conception. To that they devoted all the energies of their genius; while you may search in vain in the best productions of Italy, not excepting the school of Venice, the one that most resembles the Spanish,—for anything approaching their success in that respect. By way of an example, in the Spasimo of Raffaele, we trace the operations of the mind, as they pierce through every feature of every countenance, and the attitude of every limb throughout the grouping of that great master-piece of expression; from the brutal impatience of the one, and the involuntary compassion of the other executioner, up to the intensity of

maternal suffering in the Virgin, and the indescribable combination of heaven and earth, which beams through the unequalled head of the Christ; but there is no deception to the eye. No one would mistake any of the figures for reality; nor exclaim that it steps from the canvass; nor does any one wish for such an effect, or perceive any such deficiency.

What, on the contrary, was the exclamation of Murillo before Campana's Descent from the Cross? This master-piece of Pedro de Campana is seen at the head of the sacristy of the cathedral. It was so favourite a picture with Murillo, that he used to pass much of his time every day, seated before it. On one occasion, his presence being required on an affair of importance, which he had forgotten, his friends found him at his usual post before the Descent; when, pointing to the figure of the Christ, he replied to their remonstrances, "I am only waiting until they have taken him down."

Although Murillo admired this perfect representation of material nature, his own works are exceptions, in fact almost the only exceptions, to this peculiarity of the Spanish masters. He partakes, indeed, of the qualities of both schools in an eminent degree. In intellectual expression and delineation of the operations of the mind, he is superior to

all his countrymen, but inferior to the first Italian painters. In the material imitation of nature, he is superior to the greater number of the Italians, but inferior to the other principal Spanish artists. There is, at Madrid, a Christ on the Cross, of his, in which he has attempted this effect—an effort he ought rather to have despised. The picture contains no other object than the figure, and the cross of admirably imitated wood, on a simple black, or rather dark brown background, representing complete darkness. After sitting a short time before it, you certainly feel a sort of uncomfortable sensation, caused by the growing reality of the pale and tormented carcass; but it is not to be compared to the Descent of Campana. There the whole group is to the life, and no darkness called in to aid the effect. The drooping body is exposed to a powerful light, and hangs its leaden weight on the arms of those who support it, with a reality perfectly startling.

This picture is placed in the centre of the upper end of the sacristy, as being considered the best of those therein contained: but it is not without rivals. The few paintings placed here are first rate; particularly the portraits of the two archbishops of Seville, San Leandro, and San Isidoro—two of Murillo's most exquisite productions. Some of the greatest compositions of this painter are contained

in the chapels we have passed in review, where they serve for altar-pieces, each filling an entire side of a chapel. Of these large pictures, I think the best on the side we are visiting is the Saint Francis. The Saint is represented kneeling to a vision of the Virgin. It may certainly be ranked among Murillo's best efforts in the style he employed, when treating these celestial subjects, and which has been called his vaporous manner. To speak correctly, two of his three manners are employed in this picture, since the Saint is an instance of that called his warm manner.

On the opposite or north side of the cathedral, in the first chapel after passing the door of the Sagrario, is the San Antonio. This is probably the greatest work of Murillo in the two styles just mentioned, and certainly the most magnificent picture contained in the cathedral. On the lower foreground is the Saint, in adoration before the Christ, who appears in the centre, surrounded by the Heavenly Host.

No one but Murillo could ever have thus embodied his conception of a supernatural vision. On sitting down before this canvass, from which, as it extends across the whole chapel, no other object can draw off the attention, you speedily yield to the irresistible power of abstraction, and are lost

in an ecstasy, nearly resembling that which the artist has sought to represent in the countenance and attitude of his Saint. The eye wanders in a sort of trance through the glorious assemblage of Heaven. The whole scene looks real: but it is only on taking time to study the details that you discover the prodigies of talent displayed in the drawing and finishing of this picture. An angel, suspended in front of the lower portion of the group, more especially attracts the attention. One leg is extended towards the spectator, the foreshortening of which is a marvel of execution.

Over the San Antonio, as it does not reach to the ceiling, there is a smaller picture, representing the Baptism of Christ, also by Murillo. In a chapel at the south-west angle of the church, there are several fine paintings by Luis de Vargas, one of the founders of the school of Seville.

In the choir, the collection of books for the chanting services is worth seeing. Of these immense folios, enclosed in massive covers, bound with a profusion of wrought metal mostly silver—may be counted upwards of a hundred. They are filled with paintings, infinite in minuteness and beauty. For the performances of the daily services and all duties, ordinary and extraordinary, within this edifice, more than eight hundred persons are

employed. Five hundred masses are recited each day at the different altars: all of which taking place during the early part of the day, an idea may be formed of the business which goes on. Of the six or seven organs, I have heard three playing at the same time in different parts of the church; but so widely separated, as by no means to interfere with each other's harmony. One of them was one of the two great organs which face each other over the choir. These two play a duet once a year, on the day of the Corpus. The effect they produce is not so powerful as that produced at Toledo, but far more beautiful. At Toledo the two which correspond to these, are assisted on that occasion by a third, as powerful as both the others united, placed over the portal of the south transept, at an elevation of about seventy feet from the ground.

Among the ceremonies of the cathedral of Seville is one sufficiently unique to be deserving of notice. *El baile de los seis* (dance of the six), is performed by eight youths — probably by six originally — every evening during the feast of the Conception. It takes place in front of the high-altar, on which her statue is placed on that occasion. The service is one of especial solemnity; and, as such, accompanied, unfortunately as on all such occa-

sions, by an orchestra of violins, to the exclusion of the organs. The singing commences at four o'clock in the afternoon, in the choir, and continues until half-past six, when all move in procession through the great railing, across the transept, and ascend the flight of steps which lead to the Capilla Mayor. Here they take their seats according to rank, on benches placed in rows from east to west, fronting a space which is left open down the centre, in front of the altar. The orchestra occupies a corner near the railing; and on the two front benches are seated—four facing four—the eight youths, dressed in the ancient Spanish costume, all sky-blue silk and white muslin, and holding each his hat, also light blue, with a flowing white feather.

The chorus now recommences, but speedily drops; when the orchestra sounds a beautiful air in the waltz measure. This is played once by the instruments alone, and joined the second time by the voices of the eight boys, or youths of the age of sixteen to eighteen; who, after having accompanied a short time, start to their legs, and continue in the same strain. At the next reprise they all, as if by word of command, place their hats on their heads, and one or two minutes after, the chant still continuing, advance, and meet in the centre, then return

each to his place; advance a second time, and turn round each other, using the waltz step.

After singing and dancing for about a quarter of an hour, the voices are exchanged for the sounds of castagnettes, which they have held all this time in their hands, and the measure becomes more animated; and thus they terminate the performance. The same ceremony is repeated each night of the seven; only varying the air of the waltz, of which they have two.

This ceremony, now belonging exclusively to the cathedral of Seville, was originally performed in some other cathedrals; but has been gradually laid aside in all the others, having been found to occasion irreverent behaviour among a portion of the spectators. It was originally introduced among the observances in honour of the anniversary of the Conception, as a natural manifestation of joy; and such a genuine Spanish bolero would have been: but the slow time of the music, and the measured movements, adopted for the purpose of suiting the performance to the solemnity of the place, have changed the nature of the dance, and deprived it of everything approaching to cheerfulness.

LETTER XX.

SPANISH BEGGARS. HAIRDRESSING. THE GIRALDA. CASA DE
PILATOS. MONASTERIES. ITALICA.

Seville.

MENDICITY is one of the Curiosities—and not the least picturesque one—of this antique country. There should be a Mendicity Society for its preservation, together with other legacies of the middle ages. An entertaining book might be filled with its annals and anecdotes.

Nowhere, I should think, can beggary be a more lucrative calling. The convents having been the inexhaustible providence of these tribes, on their suppression the well-born and bred Spaniards consider the charge to have devolved upon them, in the absence of all possible legislation on the subject: and few, especially of the fair sex, turn a deaf ear to the mute eloquence of the open hand. Even a stranger, if possessed of an ear, resists with difficulty the graceful appeal of the well trained

proficient : *Noble caballero, un ochavito por Dios.*— A blind girl made no request ; but exclaimed—“Oh that the Virgin of Carmen may preserve your sight !”

The mendicants are classified, and assume every form of external humanity. Being in the coach-office near the Plaza del Duque, a tall well-dressed man, dangling a dark kid glove, entered, and, walking up to the book-keeper, after having carefully closed the door, made some communication to him in a low voice. The other replied in a similar tone, and they parted with mutual bows. I was puzzled on the man's turning to me and observing that the beggars were very annoying in Seville ; but still certain my conjecture could not but be erroneous, I said “you don't mean to say that your acquaintance” —“Oh, no acquaintance ; I never saw him before : he only came to beg.”

This species of *cavallero* pauper should by no means be encouraged ; he is not of the picturesque sort. Nowhere do the wretches look their character better than at Seville ; as all admirers of Murillo can testify, without consulting any other nature than his canvass. But these consider they confer a sort of obligation on the individual they condescend to apply to. Nothing can exceed their astonishment and indignation when refused. Their

great highway is the superb polished mosaic marble of the Cathedral; where they divide the authority with the embroidered dignitaries of the choir. It is useless to hope for an instant's leisure for the contemplation of this unique temple, until you have disposed of its entire population of ragged despots.

A sort of chivalrous etiquette is observed, in virtue of which a female chorus is the first to form your escort from pillar to pillar. These dismissed, you are delivered over to the barefooted Murillos. There are two modes of escape. The rich man should go in with his two hands filled with coin, and distribute to all, even to many who will return for a second contribution before he has done. But if economical, you may attain the same end, and more permanently, by sacrificing four or five days to walking up and down the nave, without looking at anything, but simply undergoing the persecution of the mob. After the fourth visit you will be left in peace.

These counsels I am competent to give you from dreadful experience; more dreadful from my having pursued a middle course. To one barefooted and rotten-scalped embryo brigand I only gave a two-*quarto* piece (halfpenny) about equal in real consequence to twopence in England. If you have

ever seen, in the era of mail coaches, the look of quiet surprise on the countenance of the well-fed charioteer, who, having, after the sixth or seventh stage, opened the door, and muttered from behind his *cache-nez* the usual "coachman, gen'lemen" received a long-searched-for deprecatory sixpence from some careful knight with a false shirt-collar—you have noticed the self-same look, which was leisurely transferred by the urchin from the piece of copper in the open palm to my face, and back to the piece of copper.

Instead, however, of restoring it to me, his indignation seemed to inspire him with a sudden resolution. He rushed to a kneeling *Señorita* a few paces distant, and interrupting her devotions by a pull at the side of her mantilla, he showed the coin in the open hand, while with the other he pointed to the culprit. If he meditated revenge, he should have made another choice, instead of deranging a garment, from the folds of which a real Andalusian mouth and pair of eyes, turning full on me, aimed a smile which, I need not inform you, was not dear at two *quartos*.

Could such a smile have been natural, and the expression of mere curiosity, or was it intended for a death-wound, dealt for another's vengeance? and did the velvet language of those eyes signify a

horrible "Pallas te hoc vulnere," in favour of the ragamuffin I had offended? At all events, the incident lost him a more munificent remuneration, by driving me from the spot, and expelling from my head, a project previously formed, of inviting him to my *fonda* to be sketched.

With regard to the oft and still recurring subject of Spanish beauty, you are hereby warned against giving ear to what may be said by tourists, who, by way of taking a new view of an old subject, simply give the lie to their predecessors. It is true, that in the central provinces, the genuine characteristic Moro-Iberian beauty is rare, and that there is little of any other sort to replace it; but this is not the case with Andalucia, where you may arrive fresh from the perusal of the warm effusions of the most smitten of poets, and find the Houris of real flesh and blood, by no means overrated.

One of their peculiar perfections extends to all parts of the Peninsula. This is the hair; everywhere your eye lights upon some passing specimen of these unrivalled masses of braided jet; at which not unfrequently natives of the same sex turn with an exclamation—*Que pelo tan hermoso!*

I surprised the other day a village matron, whose toilette, it being a holiday afternoon, was in progress in no more secluded a *tocador* than the middle of