

ments of Seville are limited to the balls at the Lonja during the Carnival, and to the opera. The opera varies its own pleasures, while it distributes its favours between the two western capitals of the province. From midsummer to midwinter Cadiz receives her share of melody, and the remaining six months are bestowed on Seville. Xeres has, I believe, a company to itself, supplied by a different *impresario*.

The Rossi is an excellent *primera dama*, although wanting in animation; and Comfortini is by no means a bad tenor. The second tenor, Tosi, is said to be ambitious of displaying his somewhat exaggerated attitudes on the boards of the Haymarket. There is a deficiency of *ensemble*, since the severe discipline necessary for obtaining that result does not accord with the genius of the place—or perhaps an unexceptionable *maestro de capella* is too expensive a luxury to suit the Seville purses. However this may be, the easy inhabitants, who hear the same opera frequently six times in a week, and would hear it seven times had not the performers a holiday on Saturday—may be taken grievous liberties with before they utter a complaint. They, in fact, look upon the performance chiefly as an excuse for resorting to this their habitual lounge.

The *Barbiere di Seviglia* should, however, be wit-



nessed here by every amateur. It is only here that justice is done to the *libretto* of Rossini's masterpiece. Figaro becomes a real barber, and scorns all velvets and finery; and Almadiva leaves his court-dress at home, and takes a good *capa* of *paño pardo* for his nocturnal excursions. The scenery represents the actual streets of Seville. Local customs are introduced, and local expressions interspersed in the Italian dialogue. On this occasion one spirit animates boxes, lunetas, orchestra, and stage. At the opening note of the first melody the allegro, passing like electricity from the corner of the page through the eye, brain, and arm of the leader, appears as though it spirted like wildfire from the extremity of his bow over stage, boxes, stalls, and galleries, lighting up in an instant all eyes with animation and pleasure.

In the scene of old Bartolo's discomfiture the melodies of the *maestro* are totally extinguished beneath the din of overturned tables and chairs, and cracking furniture; and the joyous exclamations of the entire assembly, unite with the jibes of the actors, and seem to pursue the poor old guardian with one overwhelming peal of derision.

But it is only in this one instance that representations come off in such a manner. On the contrary, the company exhibit habitually all the aristocratic



*nonchalance* of larger capitals. Their business there is society. It is there that *les affaires de cœur* hold their Royal Exchange; and observation, conjecture, and speculation,—but usually without ill-nature,—sufficiently occupy those who are not actors in this general by-play. The youth of these climes do not put in practice the same arts of concealment and reserve as are adopted in colder cities; but each, unconscious of evil, makes for the box of his *enamora*ta; or, if that is impossible, for the nearest vacant situation. Advise, therefore, any friend who may intend visiting Seville, not hastily to pay his visit of curiosity to the opera, but to wait, if possible, until offered a seat by some *habituée* in her box. This *Senora* may possibly not have any *affaire* of her own on hand; in fact the married ladies of course form an exception, if not in all cases, at least as far as regards such undisguised manifestations of preference:—in this case she will take delight in putting him *au fait* of all those that are going forward.

If in a conversable humour she will do more. Commencing with the nearest, or the most conspicuous of the performers in these mute dramas, she will relate to him the vicissitudes of the respective histories up to the time then present, and the probabilities which each case may suggest for the future. Thus your friend, instead of having sacrificed an



entire evening to the dubious amusement of following the plot of a single opera, which may have been a bad one, or interpreted by bad actors, will return to rest with some score of plots and romances filling all the corners of his memory—all possessing the zest of reality and actuality, as he will have contemplated the heroes and heroines in their mortal shape, and clothed in indisputable *capas* and *mantillas*; besides, another advantage which these romances will possess over all the popular and standard novels—that of omitting the most insipid chapter of all, the one containing the *dénouement*.

There only remain two public buildings worthy of notice; but they are such as to rank among the most remarkable of Spain. The Lonja (Exchange) was erected during the reign of Philip the Second, in the year 1583, by Juan de Herrera. At this period the excesses committed in all parts of Spain by the architects, no longer restrained by rule of any sort, had brought about a salutary effect, after a sufficiently lengthened surfeit of extravagance. Herrera took the lead in the reaction, and followed the more correct models of art.

Among the authors of some of the most lamentable specimens of aberration of style scattered throughout Spain, are found several names high in rank among the painters of the best period. These artists, de-



sirous of emulating some of the great masters of Italy, who had attained equal superiority in architecture, painting, and sculpture, risked their reputation in these different pursuits with greater confidence than just appreciation of their peculiar genius. At the head of them was Alonzo Cano, one of the most distinguished painters of the schools of Andalusia; and who has been called the Guido of Spain. He may certainly lay a more legitimate claim to that title than to that of the Michael Angelo of Spain, accorded to him by some of the less judicious of his admirers for no other reason than that of his combining the three above mentioned arts.

His paintings are characterized by a peculiar delicacy of manner, correct drawing, and exquisite finish. The sickly paleness of his flesh is sometimes unpleasing, and his personages are gainers by the addition of drapery, in the arrangement of which he approaches to the excellence of the best Italian schools. The life of this artist was varied by more adventure than usually falls to the lot of those of his profession. His talent as a painter had already become celebrated while he was still a monk, having taken the vows very early in life. He had been from the first an enemy to the subordination of the cloister, and at length a series of irregularities led to his expulsion from his monastery.



Alonzo was not, however, the original inventor of this eccentric style. A Roman architect, Francisco Borromini, the rival of Bernini, and of whom it was said, that he was the first of his time in elevation of genius, and the last in the employment of it,—is supposed to have first introduced it. Followers and imitators of these sprung up in great numbers, and Spain was speedily inundated with extravagancies: façades, moulded into more sinuosities than a labyrinth, — cornices, multiplying their angles like a saw, murderously amputated columns, and broken-backed pediments. Juan de Herrera was not, probably, possessed of more talent than the Roman; but of what he had he made a better use. His reputation was beginning to make rapid progress, when he was selected, on the death of Juan Baptista de Toledo, to continue the Escorial. His task there was not the simple one of continuing the unfinished pile according to the plans already traced.

The religious fervor of Philip the Second was on the ascent, and during the progress of the building he had resolved to double the number of monks, for whom accommodation had been provided by the original plan. To meet this necessity, Herrera raised the buildings to double their intended elevation. His completion of this immense work, rendered more difficult than it would have been had the original design been his own, or even had



that of his predecessor been persisted in (for various other modifications were commanded, especially with regard to the plan of the church,) fully established his fame; and the edifice would probably have gained, had Philip not, at the last moment, yielded to a new caprice, and called in another artist (the architect of the famous country-house of the Viso) to erect the great staircase.

The object of Herrera, traceable in all his works, was the re-establishment of antique art in all its purity. In cathedrals success was more difficult of attainment than in civil edifices; but the effort is easily discerned, striving against the difficulties inseparable from the system, which applies to the purposes of one creed the principles of art invented for ministering to other forms. His cathedral of Valladolid is an instance of this: the most unsuccessful portion of which (the tower) has fallen before the completion of the edifice. Should the works ever be continued, this would be a most fortunate circumstance, were it not that the future builders are sure to persist in the same course, and to disfigure the pile with another similar excrescence, in contempt of symmetry and rule.

The Lonja of Seville is a structure so perfect as to bid defiance to criticism. It might have been built by Vitruvius. The general plan is a quadrangle, enclosing a court surrounded by an arcade. There are



two stories, ornamented externally by pilasters. The order is Tuscan, both above and below. The court, staircase, and various apartments, are decorated with a profusion of the rarest marbles. The whole is a specimen, almost unique, of chaste elegance and massive solidity. In this edifice, the resort of wealthy traders during the period of the colonial prosperity of Spain, are contained, among the archives, the original despatches of Columbus: and, it is also said, those of Cortez and Pizarro.

The Ayuntamiento, or Town Hall, is an edifice of another sort. It is of the *plateresco* epoch. But Seville, having been apparently preserved by especial favour from the introduction of specimens of bad taste; it is a building of extreme beauty. The façade is divided into two unequal parts. The smaller of the two is covered with sculpture, and contains an open porch or vestibule, decorated throughout with a profusion of ornament. I could not learn the name of the artist to whom these sculptures are attributed, but they are worthy of the chisel of John of Bologna. The other portion of the front is without ornament from the ground to the first story, along the whole extent of which runs a series of open arches supported by columns. These columns and arches are models of lightness and grace.

The Ayuntamiento is situated in the Plaza de San Francisco; from one extremity of which a street



leads to the cathedral; at the other commences the principal street of Seville, called the Calle de la Sierpe. Here are all the best shops, and the principal cafés. It leads also to the post-office, to the opera, and to the Plaza del Duque, so called from its containing the house of the Duke of Medina Sidonia; but it possesses, likewise, two other ducal residences, besides others of almost equal pretension. These mansions are scarcely ever occupied by their proprietors. It is a small irregularly formed place, and its ducal habitations, whatever they may be internally, by no means improve its appearance.

A few streets further on is the Alameda. This is a place magnificent in extent, but possessing no architectural merit. Its principal ornament is an avenue of elms, of about half a mile in length, at the head of which are placed the two antique columns and statues of the temple of Hercules. At the further extremity, on the left, is the church of the Jesuits, closed since the revolution.



THE ATARIAN

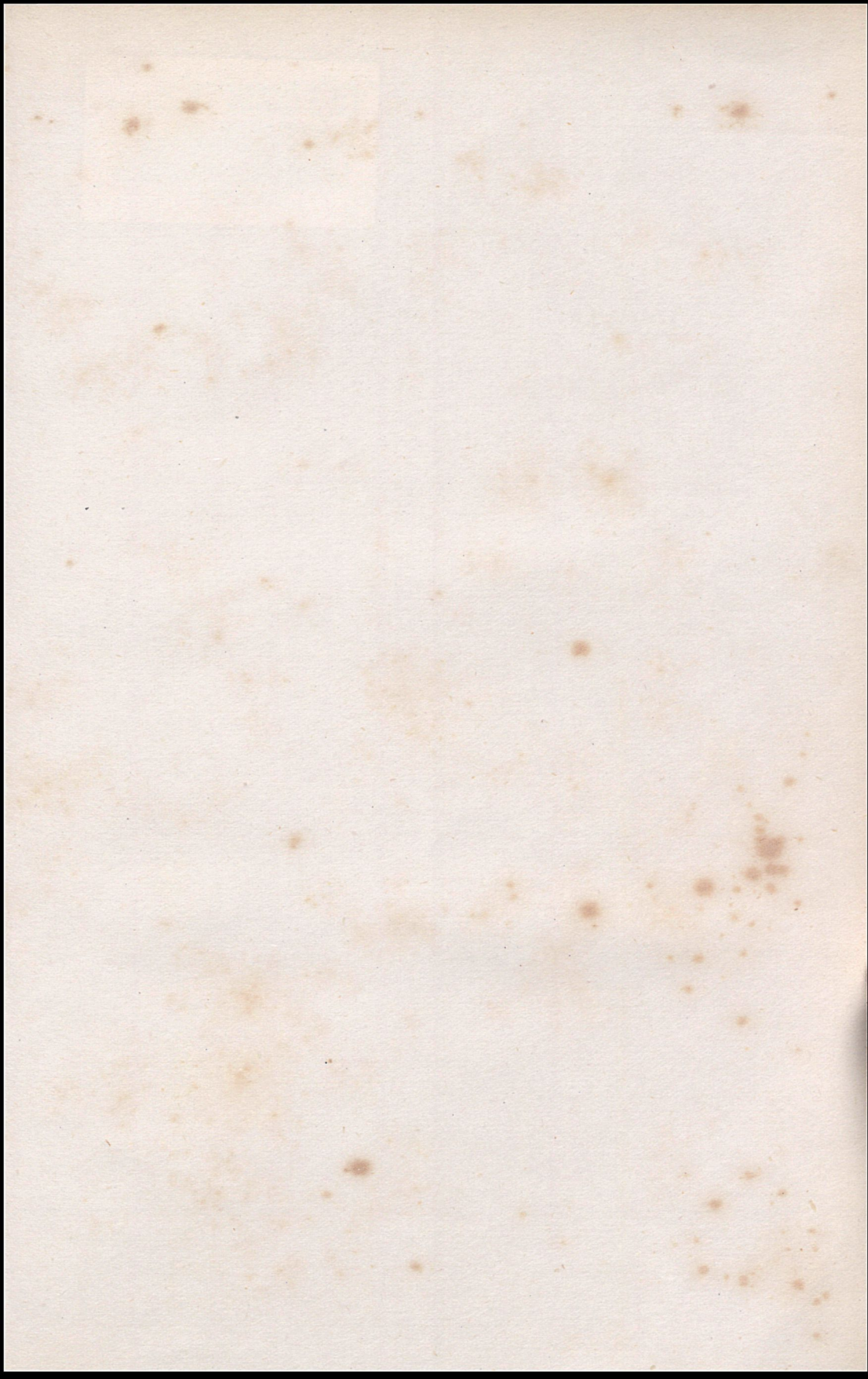
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