

lectured on history, you are at all events forewarned, and may wait for the next despatch.

Unlike many of the principal towns of the Peninsula, which content themselves with no more modern descent than from Nebuchadnezzar or Hercules, Burgos modestly accepts a paternity within the domain of probability. A German, Nuño Belchides, married, in the reign of Alonzo the Great, King of Oviedo, a daughter of the second Count of Castile, Don Diego Porcellos. This noble prevailed on his father-in-law to assemble the inhabitants of the numerous villages dispersed over the central part of the province, and to found a city, to which he gave the German name of "city" with a Spanish termination. It was Don Fruela III., King of Leon, whose acts of injustice and cruelty caused so violent an exasperation, that the nobles of Castile, of whom there existed several of a rank little inferior to that of the titular Count of the province, threw up their allegiance, and selected two of their own body, Nuño Rasura and Lain Calvo, to whom they intrusted the supreme authority, investing them with the modest title of Judges, by way of a check, lest at any future time they should be tempted, upon the strength of a higher distinction, to make encroachments on the common liberties.

The first of the two judges, Nuño Rasura, was the

son of the above-mentioned Nuño Belchides and his wife, Sulla Bella (daughter of Diego Porcellos), and grandfather of Fernan Gonzalez. His son Gonzalo Nuño, Fernan's father, succeeded on his death to the dignity of Judge of Castile, and became extremely popular, owing to his affability, and winning urbanity of deportment in his public character. He established an academy in his palace for the education of the sons of the nobles, who were instructed under his own superintendence in all the accomplishments which could render them distinguished in peace or in war. The maternal grandfather of Fernan Gonzalez was Nuño Fernandez, one of the Counts of Castile who were treacherously seized and put to death by Don Ordoño, King of Leon. The young Count of Castile is described as having been a model of elegance. To singular personal beauty he added an unmatched proficiency in all the exercises then in vogue, principally in arms and equitation. These accomplishments, being added to much affability and good-nature, won him the affections of the young nobles, who strove to imitate his perfections, while they enjoyed the festivities of his palace.

It appears that, notwithstanding the rebellion, and appointment of Judges, Castile had subsequently professed allegiance to the Kings of Leon; for a

second revolt was organized in the reign of Don Ramiro, at the head of which we find Fernan Gonzalez. On this occasion, feeling themselves too feeble to resist the royal troops, the rebels had recourse to a Moorish chief, Aecipha. The King, however, speedily drove the Moors across the frontier, and succeeded in capturing the principal revolters. After a short period these were released, on the sole condition of taking the oath of allegiance; and the peace was subsequently sealed by the marriage of a daughter of Gonzalez with Don Ordoño, eldest son of Ramiro, and heir to the kingdom.

The Count of Castile was, however, too powerful a vassal to continue long on peaceable terms with a sovereign, an alliance with whose family had more than ever smoothed the progressive ascent of his pretensions. Soon after the accession of his son-in-law Don Ordoño, he entered into an alliance against him with the King of Navarre. This declaration of hostility was followed by the divorce of Fernan's daughter by the King, who immediately entered into a second wedlock. The successor of this monarch, Don Sancho, surnamed the Fat, was indebted for a large portion of his misfortunes and vicissitudes to the hostility of the Count of Castile. Don Ordoño, the pretender to his throne, son of Alonzo surnamed the Monk, with the aid of Gon-

zalez, whose daughter Urraca, the repudiated widow of the former sovereign, he married, took easy possession of the kingdom, driving Don Sancho for shelter to the court of his uncle the then King of Navarre. It is worth mentioning, that King Sancho took the opportunity of his temporary expulsion from his states, to visit the court of Abderrahman at Cordova, and consult the Arab physicians, whose reputation for skill in the removal of obesity had extended over all Spain. History relates that the treatment they employed was successful, and that Don Sancho, on reascending his throne, had undergone so complete a reduction as to be destitute of all claims to his previously acquired *sobriquet*.

All these events, and the intervals which separated them, fill a considerable space of time ; and the establishment of the exact dates would be a very difficult, if not an impossible, undertaking. Various wars were carried on during this time by Gonzalez, and alliances formed and dissolved. Several more or less successful campaigns are recorded against the Moors of Saragoza, and of other neighbouring states. The alliance with Navarre had not been durable. In 959 Don Garcia, King of that country, fought a battle with Fernan Gonzalez, by whom he was taken prisoner, and detained in Burgos thirteen

months. The conquest of the independence of Castile is related in the following manner.

In the year 958, the Cortes of the kingdom were assembled at Leon, whence the King forwarded a special invitation to the Count of Castile, requiring his attendance, and that of the Grandees of the province, for "deliberation on affairs of high importance to the state." Gonzalez, although suspicious of the intentions of the sovereign, unable to devise a suitable pretext for absenting himself, repaired to Leon, attended by a considerable *cortége* of nobles. The King went forth to receive him; and it is related, that refusing to accept a present, offered by Gonzalez, of a horse and a falcon, both of great value, a price was agreed on; with the condition that, in case the King should not pay the money on the day named in the agreement, for each successive day that should intervene until the payment, the sum should be doubled. Nothing extraordinary took place during the remainder of the visit; and the Count, on his return to Burgos, married Doña Sancha, sister of the King of Navarre.

It is probable that some treachery had been intended against Gonzalez, similar to that put in execution on a like occasion previous to his birth, when the Counts of Castile were seized and put to death in their prison; for, not long after, a second

invitation was accepted by the Count, who was now received in a very different manner. On his kneeling to kiss the King's hand, Don Sancho burst forth with a volley of reproaches, and, repulsing him with fury, gave orders for his immediate imprisonment. It is doubtful what fate was reserved for him by the hatred of the Queen-mother, who had instigated the King to the act of treachery, in liquidation of an ancient personal debt of vengeance of her own, had not the Countess of Castile, Doña Sancha, undertaken his liberation.

Upon receiving the news of her husband's imprisonment, she allowed a short period to elapse, in order to mature her plan, and at the same time lull suspicion of her intentions. She then repaired to Leon, on pretext of a pilgrimage to Santiago, on the route to which place Leon is situated. She was received by King Sancho with distinguished honours, and obtained permission to visit her husband, and to pass a night in his prison. The following morning, Gonzalez, taking advantage of early twilight, passed the prison-doors in disguise of the Countess, and, mounting a horse which was in readiness, escaped to Castile.

This exploit of Doña Sancha does not belong to the days of romance and chivalry alone: it reminds us of the still more difficult task, accomplished by

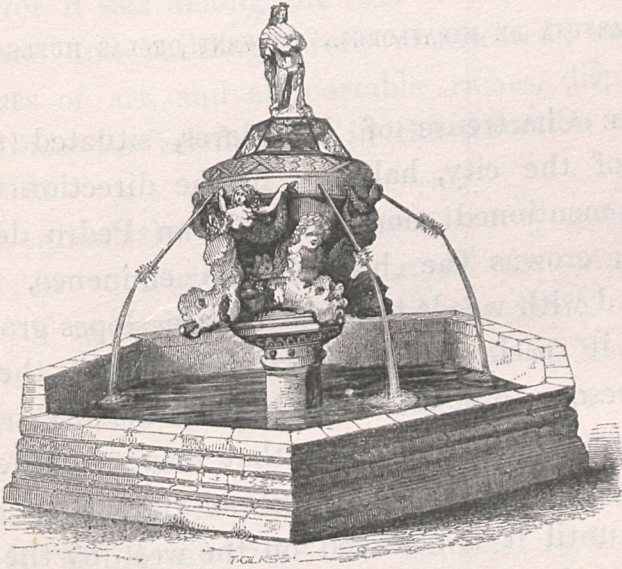
the beautiful Winifred, Countess of Nithisdale, who, eight centuries later, effected the escape of the rebel Earl, her husband, from the Tower, in a precisely similar manner; thus rescuing him from the tragic fate of his friends and fellow-prisoners, the Lords Derwentwater and Kenmure.

Doña Sancha obtained her liberty without difficulty, being even complimented by the King on her heroism, and provided with a brilliant escort on her return to Castile. Gonzalez contented himself with claiming the price agreed upon for the horse and falcon; and—the King not seeming inclined to liquidate the debt, which, owing to the long delay, amounted already to an enormous sum, or looking upon it as a pretext for hostility, the absence of which would not prevent the Count of Castile, in his then state of exasperation, from having recourse to arms—passed the frontier of Leon at the head of an army, and, laying waste the country, approached gradually nearer to the capital. At length Don Sancho sent his treasurer to clear up the account, but it was found that the debt exceeded the whole amount of the royal treasure; upon which Gonzalez claimed and obtained, on condition of the withdrawal of his troops, a formal definitive grant of Castile, without reservation, to himself and his descendants.

Before we quit Burgos for its environs, one more

edifice requires our notice. It is a fountain, occupying the centre of the space which faces the principal front of the cathedral. This little antique monument charms, by the quaint symmetry of its design and proportions, and perhaps even by the terribly mutilated state of the four fragments of Cupids, which, riding on the necks of the same number of animals so maltreated as to render impossible the discovery of their race, form projecting angles, and support the basin on their shoulders. Four mermaids, holding up their tails, so as not to interfere with the operations of the Cupids, ornament the sides of the basin, which are provided with small apertures for the escape of the water; the top being covered by a flat circular stone, carved around its edge. This stone,—a small, elegantly shaped pedestal, which surmounts it,—and the other portions already described, are nearly black, probably from antiquity; but on the pedestal stands a little marble virgin, as white as snow. This antique figure harmonises by its mutilation with the rest, although injured in a smaller degree; and at the same time adds to the charm of the whole, by the contrast of its dazzling whiteness with the dark mass on which it is supported. The whole is balanced on the capital of a pillar, of a

most original form, which appears immediately above the surface of a sheet of water enclosed in a large octagonal basin.



FOUNTAIN OF SANTA MARIA.

LETTER VI.

CARTUJA DE MIRAFLORES. CONVENT OF LAS HUELGAS.

Burgos.

THE Chartreuse of Miraflores, situated to the east of the city, half-way in the direction of the above-mentioned monastery of San Pedro de Cardenas, crowns the brow of an eminence, which, clothed with woods towards its base, slopes gradually until it reaches the river. This spot is the most picturesque to be found in the environs of Burgos,—a region little favoured in that respect. The view, extending right and left, follows the course of the river, until it is bounded on the west by the town, and on the east by a chain of mountains, a branch of the Sierra of Oca. Henry the Third, grandfather of Isabel the Catholic, made choice of this position for the erection of a palace; the only remnant of it now existing is the church, which has since become the inheritance of the Carthusian monks, the successors of its royal founder.

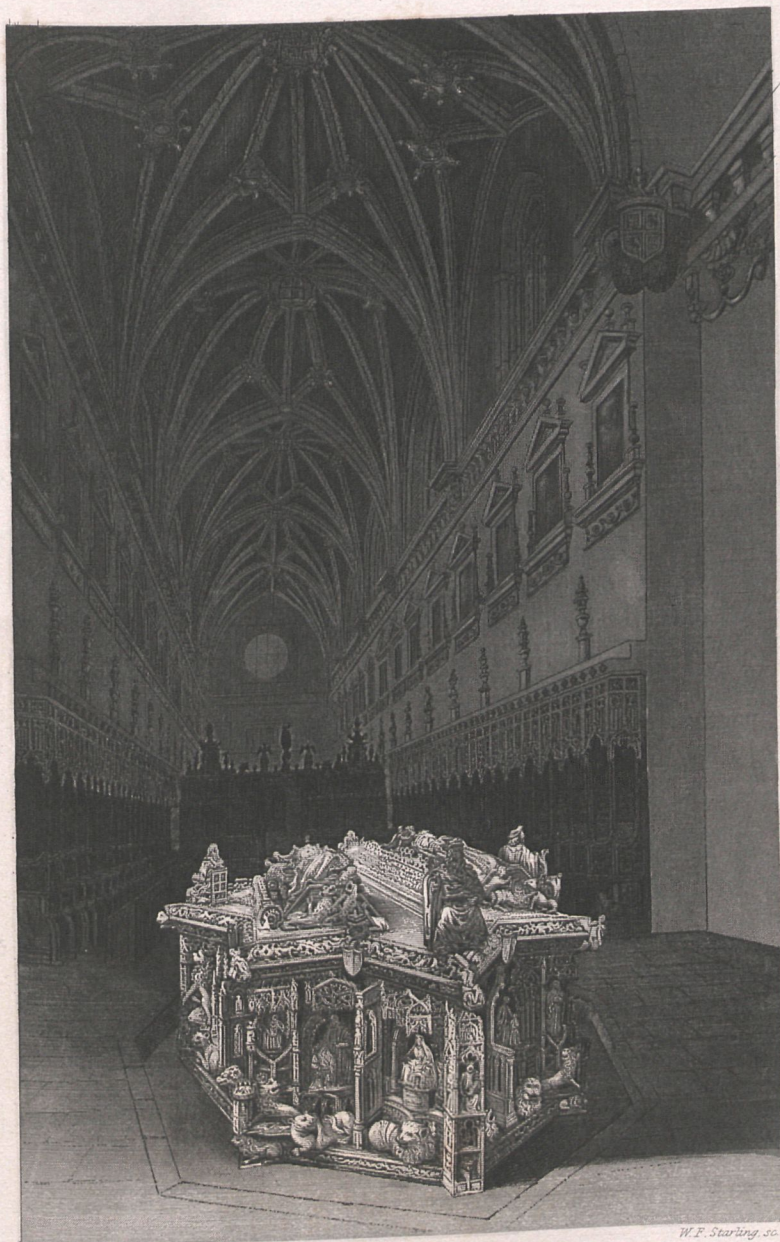
The late revolution, after sparing the throne of Spain, displayed a certain degree of logic, if not in all its acts, at least in sparing, likewise, two or three of the religious establishments, under the protection of which the principal royal mausoleums found shelter and preservation. The great Chartrouse of Xeres contained probably no such palladium, for it was among the first of the condemned: its lands and buildings were confiscated; and its treasures of art, and all portable riches, dispersed, as likewise its inhabitants, in the direction of all the winds.

In England the name of Xeres is only generally known in connection with one of the principal objects of necessity, which furnish the table of the *gastronome*; but in Andalucia the name of Xeres de la Frontera calls up ideas of a different sort. It is dear to the wanderer in Spain, whose recollections love to repose on its picturesque position, its sunny skies, its delicious fruits, its amiable and lively population, and lastly on its once magnificent monastery, and the treasures of art it contained. The Prior of that monastery has been removed to the Cartuja of Burgos, where he presides over a community, reduced to four monks, who subsist almost entirely on charity. This amiable and gentleman-like individual, in whom the monk has in no degree

injured the man of the world,—although a large estate, abandoned for the cloister, proved sufficiently the sincerity of his religious professions,—had well deserved a better fate than to be torn in his old age from his warm Andalusian retreat, and transplanted to the rudest spot in the whole Peninsula, placed at an elevation of more than four thousand feet above the level of the Atlantic, and visited up to the middle of June by snow-storms. At the moment I am writing, this innocent victim of reform is extended on a bed of sickness, having only recently escaped with his life from an attack, during which he was given over.

This Cartuja possesses more than the historical reminiscences with which it is connected, to attract the passing tourist. It owes its prolonged existence to the possession of an admirable work of art,—the tomb of Juan the Second and his Queen Isabel, which stands immediately in front of the high altar of the church. This living mass of alabaster, the work of Gil de Siloë, son of the celebrated Diego, presents in its general plan the form of a star. It turns one of its points to the altar. Its mass, or thickness from the ground to the surface, measures about six feet; and this is consequently the height at which are laid the two recumbent figures.

It is impossible to conceive a work more elaborate



N.A. Wells, del.

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INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF MIRAFLORES,
NEAR BURGOS.

