

than the details of the costumes of the King and Queen. The imitation of lace and embroidery, the exquisite delicacy of the hands and features, the infinitely minute carving of the pillows, the architectural railing by which the two statues are separated, the groups of sporting lions and dogs placed against the foot-boards, and the statues of the four Evangelists, seated at the four points of the star which face the cardinal points of the compass,—all these attract first the attention as they occupy the surface; but they are nothing to the profusion of ornament lavished on the sides. The chisel of the artist has followed each retreating and advancing angle of the star, filling the innermost recesses with life and movement. It would be endless to enter into a detailed enumeration of all this. It is composed of lions and lionesses, panthers, dogs,—crouching, lying, sitting, rampant, and standing; of saints, male and female, and personifications of the cardinal virtues. These figures are represented in every variety of posture,—some standing on pedestals, and others seated on beautifully wrought arm-chairs, but all enclosed respectively in the richest Gothic tracery, and under cover of their respective niches. Were there no other object of interest at Burgos, this tomb would well repay the traveller for a halt of a few days, and a country walk.

At the opposite side of the town may be seen the royal convent of Las Huelgas ; but as the nuns reserve to themselves the greater part of the church, including the royal tombs, which are said to be very numerous, no one can penetrate to satisfy his curiosity. It is, however, so celebrated an establishment, and of such easy access from the town, that a sight of what portions of the buildings are accessible deserves the effort of the two hundred yards' walk which separates it from the river promenade. This Cistercian convent was founded towards the end of the twelfth century by Alonzo the Eighth,—the same who won the famous battle of the Navas de Tolosa. It occupies the site of the pleasure-grounds of a royal retreat, as is indicated by the name itself. In its origin it was destined for the reception, exclusively, of princesses of the blood royal. It was consequently designed on a scale of peculiar splendour. Of the original buildings, however, only sufficient traces remain to confirm the records of history, but not to convey an adequate idea of their magnificence. What with the depredations of time, the vicissitudes of a situation in the midst of provinces so given to contention, and repeated alterations, it has evidently, as far as regards the portions to a view of which admission can be obtained, yielded almost all claims to identity with its ancient self.

The entire church, with the exception of a small portion partitioned off at the extremity, and containing the high altar, is appropriated to the nuns, and fitted up as a choir. It is very large; the length, of which an estimate may be formed externally, appearing to measure nearly three hundred feet. It is said this edifice contains the tomb of the founder, surrounded by forty others of princesses. The entrance to the public portion consists of a narrow vestibule, in which are several antique tombs. They are of stone, covered with Gothic sculpture, and appear, from the richness of their ornaments, to have belonged also to royalty. They are stowed away, and half built into the wall, as if there had not been room for their reception. The convent is said to contain handsome cloisters, courts, chapter-hall, and other state apartments, all of a construction long subsequent to its foundation. The whole is surrounded by a complete circle of houses, occupied by its various dependants and pensioners. These are enclosed from without by a lofty wall, and face the centre edifice, from which they are separated by a series of large open areas. Their appearance is that of a small town, surrounding a cathedral and palace.

The convent of the Huelgas takes precedence of all others in Spain. The abbess and her successors

were invested by the sovereigns of Leon and Castile with especial prerogatives, and with a sort of authority over all convents within those kingdoms. Her possessions were immense, and she enjoyed the sovereign sway over an extensive district, including several convents, thirteen towns, and about fifty villages. In many respects her jurisdiction resembles that of a bishop. The following is the formula which heads her official acts :

“ We, Doña . . . , by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See, Abbess of the royal monastery of Las Huelgas near to the city of Burgos, order of the Cister, habit of our father San Bernardo, Mistress, Superior, Prelate, Mother, and lawful spiritual and temporal Administrator of the said royal monastery, and its hospital called ‘ the King’s Hospital,’ and of the convents, churches, and hermitages of its filiation, towns and villages of its jurisdiction, lordship, and vassalage, in virtue of Apostolic bulls and concessions, with all sorts of jurisdiction, proper, almost episcopal, *nullius diocesis*, and with royal privileges, since we exercise both jurisdictions, as is public and notorious,” &c.

The hospital alluded to gives its name to a village, about a quarter of a mile distant, called “ Hospital del Rey.” This village is still in a sort of feudal dependance on the abbess, and is the only

remaining source of revenue to the convent, having been recently restored by a decree of Queen Isabella ; for the royal blood flowing in the veins of the present abbess had not exempted her convent from the common confiscation decreed by the revolution. The hospital, situated in the centre of the village, is a handsome edifice. The whole place is surrounded by a wall, similar to that which encloses the convent and its immediate dependances, and the entrance presents a specimen of much architectural beauty. It forms a small quadrangle, ornamented with an elegant arcade, and balustrades of an original design.

LETTER VII.

ROUTE TO MADRID. MUSEO.

Toledo.

THE route from Burgos to Madrid presents few objects of interest. The country is dreary and little cultivated; indeed, much of it is incapable of culture. For those who are unaccustomed to Spanish routes, there may, indeed, be derived some amusement from the inns, of which some very characteristic specimens lie in their way. The Diligence halts for the night at the Venta de Juanilla, a solitary edifice situated at the foot of the last or highest *étage* of the Somo Sierra, in order to leave the principal ascent for the cool of early dawn. The building is seen from a considerable distance, and looks large; but is found, on nearer approach, to be a straggling edifice of one story only.

It is a modern inn, and differs in some essential points from the ancient Spanish *posada*,—perfect specimens of which are met with at Briviesca and

Burgos. In these the vestibule is at the same time a cow-shed, sheepfold, stable, pigsty,—in fact, a spacious Noah's Ark, in which are found specimens of all living animals, that is, of all sizes, down to the most minuté; but for the purification of which it would be requisite that the entire flood should pass within, instead of on its outside. The original ark, moreover, possessed the advantage of windows, the absence of which causes no small embarrassment to those who have to thread so promiscuous a congregation, in order to reach the staircase; once at the summit of which, it must be allowed, one meets with cleanliness, and a certain degree of comfort.

The Venta de Juanilla, on the Somo Sierra, is a newish, clean-looking habitation, especially the interior, where one meets with an excellent supper, and may feast the eyes on the sight of a printed card, hanging on the wall of the dining-room, announcing that luxury of exotic gastronomy—Champagne—at three crowns a bottle: none were bold enough that evening to ask for a specimen.

There is less of the exotic in the bed-room arrangements; in fact, the building appears to have been constructed by the Diligence proprietors to meet the immediate necessity of the occasion. The Madrid road being served by two Diligences, one, leaving the capital, meets at this point, on its first night, the

other, which approaches in the contrary direction. In consequence of this arrangement, the edifice is provided with exactly four dormitories,—two male, and two female.

Nor is this the result of an intention to diminish the numbers quartered in each male or female apartment; on the contrary, two rooms would have answered the purpose better than four, but for the inconvenience and confusion which would have arisen from the denizens of the Diligence destined to start at a later hour being aroused from their slumbers, and perhaps induced to depart by mistake, at the signal for calling the travellers belonging to the earlier conveyance,—the one starting at two o'clock in the morning, and the other at three.

On the occasion of my *bivouaque* in this curious establishment, an English couple, recently married, happened to be among the number of my fellow-sufferers; and the lady's report of the adventures of the female dormitory of our Diligence afforded us sufficient amusement to enliven the breakfast on the other side of the mountain. It appeared, that, during the hustling of the males into their enclosure, a fond mother, moved by Heaven knows what anxious apprehensions, had succeeded in abstracting from the herd her son, a tender youth of fourteen. Whether or not she expected to smuggle, without

detection, this contraband article into the female pen we could not determine. If she did, she reckoned somewhat independently of her host; for on a fellow-traveller entering in the dark, and groping about for a considerable time in search of an unoccupied nest, a sudden exclamation aroused the fatigued sleepers, followed by loud complaints against those who had admitted an interloper to this holy of holies of feminine promiscuousness, to the exclusion of one of its lawful occupants. The dispute ran high; but it must be added to the already numerous proofs of the superior energy proceeding from aroused maternal feelings, that the intruder was maintained in his usurped resting-place by his determined parent, notwithstanding the discontent naturally caused by such a proceeding.

We have now reached the centre of these provinces, the destinies of which have offered to Europe so singular an example of political vicissitude. It is an attractive occupation, in studying the history of this country, to watch the progress of the state, the ancient capital of which we have just visited,—a province which, from being probably the rudest and poorest of the whole Peninsula, became the most influential, the wealthiest, the focus of power, as it is geographically the centre of Spain,—and to witness its constantly progressive advance, as it gradually

drew within the range of its influence all the surrounding states; exemplifying the dogged perseverance of the Spanish character, which, notwithstanding repeated defeat, undermined the Arab power by imperceptible advances, and eventually ridded the Peninsula of its long-established lords. It is interesting to thread the intricate narrative of intermarriages, treaties, wars, alliances, and successions, interspersed with deeds of heroic chivalry and of blackest treachery, composing the annals of the different northern states of Spain; until at length, the Christian domination having been borne onward by successive advantages nearly to the extreme southern shores of the Peninsula, a marriage unites the two principal kingdoms, and leads to the subjection of all Spain, as at present, under one monarch.

It is still more attractive to repair subsequently to the country itself; and from this central, pyramidal summit—elevated by the hand of Nature to a higher level than the rest of the Peninsula; its bare and rugged surface exposed to all the less genial influences of the elements, and crowned by its modern capital, looking down in all directions, like a feudal castle on the fairer and more fertile regions subject to its dominion, and for the protection of which it is there proudly situated,—to take a survey of this extra-

ordinary country, view the localities immortalized by the eventful passages of its history, and muse on its still varying destinies.

Madrid has in fact already experienced threatening symptoms of the insecurity of this feudal tenure, as it were, in virtue of which it enjoys the supreme rank. Having no claim to superiority derived from its commerce, the fertility of its territory, the facility of its means of communication and intercourse with the other parts of the kingdom or with foreign states,—nothing, in fact, but its commanding and central position, and the comparatively recent choice made of it by the sovereigns for a residence; it has seen itself rivalled, and at length surpassed in wealth and enterprize, by Barcelona, and its right to be continued as the seat of government questioned and attacked. Its fall is probably imminent, should some remedy not be applied before the intermittent revolutionary fever, which has taken possession of the country, makes further advances, or puts on chronic symptoms; but its fate will be shared by the power to which it owes its creation. No residence in Europe bears a prouder and more monarchical aspect than Madrid, nor is better suited for the abode of the feudal pomp and etiquette of the most magnificent—in its day—of European courts: but riding and country sports have crossed the Channel, and are

endeavouring to take root in France ; fresco-painting has invaded England ; in Sicily marble porticoes have been painted to imitate red bricks ; and a Constitutional monarchy is being erected in Spain. Spaniards are not imitators, and cannot change their nature, although red bricks should become the materials of Italian *palazzi*, Frenchmen ride after fox-hounds, and Englishmen be metamorphosed to Michael Angelos. The Alcazar of Madrid, commanding from its windows thirty miles of royal domains, including the Escorial and several other royal residences, is not destined to become the abode of a monarch paid to receive directions from a loquacious and corrupt house of deputies,—the utmost result to be obtained from forcing on states a form of government unsuited to their character. If the Spanish reigning family, after having settled their quarrel with regard to the succession, (if ever they do so,) are compelled to accept a (so-called) Constitutional form of government, with their knowledge of the impossibility of its successful operation, they will probably endeavour, in imitation of the highly gifted sovereign of their neighbours, to stifle it, and to administrate in spite of it ; until, either wanting the talent and energy necessary for the maintenance of this false position, or their subjects, as may be expected, getting impatient at finding themselves

mystified, a total overthrow will terminate the experiment.

I am aware of the criticism to which this opinion would be exposed in many quarters ; I already hear the contemptuous upbraidings, similar to those with which the "exquisite," exulting in an unexceptionable wardrobe, lashes the culprit whose shoulders are guilty of a coat of the previous year's fashion. We are told that the tendency of minds, the progress of intellect, the spirit of the age,—all which, translated into plain language, mean (if they mean anything) the fashion,—require that nations should provide themselves each with a new Liberal government ; claiming, in consideration of the fashionable vogue and the expensive nature of the article, its introduction (unlike other British manufactures) duty-free. But it ought first to be established, whether these larger interests of humanity are amenable to the sceptre of so capricious a ruler as the fashion. It appears to me, that nations should be allowed to adapt their government to their respective characters, dispositions, habits of life, and traditions. All these are more dependant than is supposed by those who possess not the habit of reflection, on the race, the position, the soil and climate each has received from nature, which, by the influence they have exercised on their habits and dispo-