

It may have been statesmanlike, but it was very cruel, as it attacked the family in its most tender point—its honor: for not only was it a decree for the future, but one which cast a deep shadow over the past, as it was made retroactive in its operation, declaring marriages that had already been made to be invalid, and branding the offspring of such marriages as illegitimate! Thus it broke into the sanctuary of home, and affixed a stigma of degradation on innocent children.

The liberals, of course, were at once alive to the dreadful shame of such a decree, as they saw its operation in hundreds of happy homes, and made their indignant protests against it, but without result. It is not easy to do right after doing a wrong; nor to undo that which has been already done; and it would have been an awkward confession of error for a King to have to revoke his own revocation! And so this royal decree, harsh and unjust and cruel as it was, was left to stand to the end of his reign, and was bequeathed as a sad legacy to his widowed Queen.

But when Alfonso was dead and buried, and Canovas, as Prime Minister, had given way to Sagasta, the head of the Liberal party, the voice of the Protestants was heard again throughout the kingdom, demanding the restoration of the law respecting civil marriages—a claim that was one of legal right as well as natural justice. In a country which professes to be free, all men, whether Protestants or Catholics, stand on the same ground, and so long as they are quiet and peaceable citizens, have equal rights before the law—rights which cannot be denied or ignored.

What then was to hinder the Government from carrying out its own liberal policy? In our country we have but one plain rule: to find out the right in a case, and then to go ahead and do it. But Spain is not America, and things cannot be done in this blunt, republican way. The Liberal

Ministry, with the best intentions, feared to arouse the suspicions and hatreds of the Clerical party, which are so bitter in Spain; and to allay this distrust, began the business by sending an envoy to Rome to enter into negotiations for a concordat with the Pope!

Could anything be more humiliating for a people who are proud of their independence, than to have to ask permission of a foreign power before they could decide how they could be legally married? It matters not what that power may be, whether prince or priest, king or kaiser, or pontiff, it is a confession of servitude, and a badge of degradation.

Of course the Pope, or those about him, wishing to retain power in all Catholic countries, stoutly opposed any relaxation of the iron rule in Spain, the result of which is that the decree against civil marriages still stands, and the cruel wrongs which it inflicts are to this day unredressed.

It is discouraging to see such a sign of reaction in a country for which we hoped so much; but we are not obliged to consider this reaction as a persistent force—a set-back from which there can be no return. These ups and downs of parties are but the ebb and flow of a sea which, however fast it may be running out just now, will by-and-by come back and roll its thundering waves upon the shore. The tendency of the age is towards liberty, and that tendency, however it may be checked, cannot be permanently arrested in any civilized country. In Spain things move slowly, but it is only a question of time when this great injustice shall be done away. If I speak of it now, it is not to put dishonor upon a country which has entered on the path of liberty, but only to show that it has not yet attained unto perfection, and has to advance much farther before it can stand in the same rank with England or the United States, or even with France or Italy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ESCORIAL—PHILIP THE SECOND—THE BURIAL-PLACE OF KINGS.

What the Palace of Versailles is in France, the Escorial is in Spain. Each is the monument of a great reign, and of a great period in history; each was erected by the greatest monarch of his time, out of resources which only a kingdom could furnish; and each remains the type of a political condition which has forever passed away. But here the resemblance ends: for Versailles was only the residence of a Court, while the Escorial, reared in performance of a religious vow, was to have a religious as well as a royal character—to be a Monastery as well as a Palace. It has also a peculiar interest as connected with one of the most extraordinary characters in history. It is therefore, on many accounts, the place of greatest interest in Spain.

As the Escorial owes its existence to this memorable vow, that must be referred to at the outset as the key to the whole design. Once, and once only, in his life, did Philip the Second venture near a field of battle—at St. Quentin in France—and then he was in mortal fear of defeat. In terror at what seemed to be before him, he

made a vow to St. Laurence (as the battle was on that saint's day) that if he would help him out of the sore-strait he was in, he would build a monastery bearing his name, in token of his gratitude. Apparently the saint took his part, for he gained the victory; nor did he (to his honor be it said) forget in the hour of success the promise which he had made in the hour of danger, but set about its execution with a deliberateness and largeness of plan which showed that he intended to make it the work of his life. Those were the days when the mines of Mexico and Peru poured their treasures into the lap of Spain. What use so fit to make of this enormous influx of wealth as to build a Temple to God, and a Monastery for those who should celebrate His worship from generation to generation? With this should be combined a Palace for his own royal house. The more the King thought of it, the more the project grew in his imagination. With all his affected humility, he was not free from ambition; and this double pile, Monastery and Palace in one, would be a monument not only to St. Laurence, but to himself.

Having formed his plan, he proceeded to carry it out with the energy and persistence which were the strong elements of his character. Selecting a site in the bleakest spot in all Spain, on the side of the Guadarrama Mountains, in sight of his capital, yet so far away from it that the noise of its streets might not disturb his royal ear, he laid the foundations of the enormous structure. The material was to be of granite, the most enduring of stone, and the walls of such thickness that no earthquake could shake them down. Thus the work was begun and carried on under the eye of Philip himself. That he might get a better view of the rising walls, he was wont to ride out to a point on the mountain-side from which he could look down upon them. Here was a huge boulder, up which

were traced some rude steps, and on the top were hewn out three seats—for himself, his wife, and his son. Here he would come when the work of the day was ended, and the twilight was fading over the tops of the mountains; and as he looked down, rejoice that he had laid the foundation of a structure which should endure as long as the everlasting hills. And so the work went on for twenty-one years till the design was complete. This was the Escorial, which we were now to visit.

It is but an hour's ride from Madrid—that is to say, it *would* be were trains run in this country as they are in America. The distance is but thirty-two miles, which one of our “lightning expresses” would pass over in three-quarters of an hour. But in Spain nothing goes by lightning, and hardly by steam. Even the forces of nature do not work here quite as in the rest of the world. When the steam is up, it seems as if the engine stopped to deliberate whether it had better go, having a doubt in its secret mind whether life, even the life of an engine, were worth living, if it were doomed to such preternatural activity. Indeed one may say truly that in this country trains are not “run” at all: they crawl. To a Spaniard time is of no consequence: the longer he is on the way, the more time he has to smoke; and he is not impatient that the ride to the Escorial should take nearly three hours!

Nor was I much disturbed by it: for as we moved slowly over the plain, bleak as a Scottish moor, and now bleaker than ever on this Winter's day, I was content to sit in a corner and look out upon a landscape which, dreary as it was, had witnessed many stirring scenes; over which had passed great armies, from the days of Cæsar to Napoleon. While thus absorbed, the Guadarrama Mountains, which may be seen on the horizon from

Madrid, come more into the foreground, though they do not improve on acquaintance (having neither the grandeur of the Alps nor the beauty of lower summits covered with verdure); but with their stunted trees and masses of rock, present a picture of complete desolation.

We do not approach directly, but winding round and round, that the railway (which is the great route to the North of Spain and to France) may find a passage through the mountains, when suddenly there rises before us a structure so vast in dimensions, and so sombre and dead in color, that it seems to be a part of the mountain itself. We know it in a moment: it can be none other than THE ESCORIAL.

And now that we are to ride up to a Royal Palace, it is befitting that we appear with some degree of state, which is provided in a huge, lumbering omnibus, that had perhaps served in its early days as a Spanish *diligence*, drawn by two horses and four mules, the latter being harnessed as a regular "stage-coach team"; while the horses were put abreast of the leaders, one on each side, to give proper dignity to this royal equipage, as well as increased speed in the ascent. As we took our seats on the top beside the driver, he raised himself up, and leaning forward like a huge bird spreading its wings, went "flying all abroad." Cracking his whip with the energy of a Spaniard, he accompanied it with a volley of exclamations (whether they were Spanish oaths, or calls on the saints for help, I knew not), till he grew so red in the face that I should have feared for the consequences had not a second appeared by the roadside to relieve him, by taking a part in his vociferations. Thus urged and lashed to their utmost speed, horses and mules started into a run, and in a few minutes landed us beside the Escorial.

During this rapid approach, I had a chance to take a

nearer view of the massive pile, and was disappointed at the absence of architectural effect. The only impression is that of bigness. Size it certainly has, covering nearly as much ground as the Great Pyramid ; but the Pyramid has a height in proportion to its base, so that it rises before us in imposing majesty ; while the Escorial presents long lines of dead wall, relieved only by thousands of windows, which, as they are all of the same diminutive pattern, need only to have bars before them to complete the picture of a Prison or Lunatic Asylum. It need hardly excite surprise if a stranger who did not know what was before him, should think that he had come suddenly, in this lonely place in the mountains, upon a Penitentiary large enough to hold all the criminals in Spain.

To get an idea of the magnitude of the Escorial, there is no better way than simply to walk round it, when in seeing the extent of its walls, one can well believe that it has nearly two thousand rooms, and no less than five thousand windows ! This vast quadrangle is divided off into courts by a number of pavilions, all so alike, and all so plain and bare, as to give countenance to the common belief that it was modelled after a gridiron, that being the instrument on which St. Laurence suffered martyrdom. But this it is by no means necessary to suppose, since such a resemblance exists in any building which is laid out in the form of a parallelogram, with pavilions connecting the longer sides, between which the courts answer to the open spaces, while the structures themselves represent the iron bars. One has but to enlarge the bars and spaces to colossal size—to cover acres with building after building, and court after court—to form a good idea of the Escorial. My impression was therefore against the popular theory of the model on which it was built ; and yet a friend who has visited the Escorial so often that he may almost be said to

have lived there, assures me that the common supposition is true : that the architect was expressly instructed to lay it out on the exact plan of that holy instrument of martyrdom ; and that he obeyed instructions even to the extent of having four towers to represent the legs turned upward in the air, with the church as the handle ! Certainly no gridiron was ever more wanting in artistic design. The impression is made more sombre by the entire absence of color. Everything is on a colossal scale ; while the use of but one material, granite, makes the whole as cold as it is colossal. Not a touch of bright color relieves the old gray walls ; while the gleams of sunshine, often interrupted, are not sufficient to light up the murky shadows of the place. Within and without it has an air of sepulchral gloom.

To this oppressive monotony there is one splendid exception in the church (or Temple, as it is called), which is the central feature of the Escorial, standing midway between the Palace and the Monastery, and rearing its lofty dome high above the dead level of the roofs that surround it. This church, if it be not worthy to rank with the great cathedrals of Spain, stands next to them. In one respect it has an advantage over them, in that the effect is not half destroyed by having the choir in the centre, thus obstructing the view from every side. Here it is withdrawn to the extreme end, over the entrance, leaving the whole space of nearly four hundred feet with nothing to break it, so that the effect is very imposing.

Here then is one part of the Escorial, in which a man of architectural taste need not be disappointed ; while the scholar and man of letters may find a pleasant retreat in the library, which was, and still is, one of the finest in Spain ; and in the collections of pictures, though these were formerly more rich than now that the masterpieces have been removed to the Museum in Madrid.

But that which gives to the Escorial an interest greater than all else, is that it was the creation of Philip the Second, of which he was the designer and builder, and in which we recognize his very self carved in stone. The interest of this dreary abode is that it was the home of that mysterious being, who sat in its heart three hundred years ago, and from it ruled half the world. His personality grows upon us as we penetrate into the interior. Entering on one side, we are taken in charge by a custodian, who leads the way up the grand staircase, and through a long succession of apartments, which remind us of Versailles. But these do not interest me much, so many palaces have I seen, and found them all alike, or at least having a general resemblance. These apartments have indeed one unusual attraction in the tapestry with which they are hung, woven after designs by Teniers, Wouvermans, and other Dutch artists, all which at another time and in another mood, we should have admired as splendid specimens of the painter's and the weaver's art. But just then we were intent on something else, and hurried through these tapestried halls, hardly pausing even in that of the Ambassadors, in which they were accustomed to wait till they could be admitted to the royal presence. But here we pricked up our ears, as our conductor said "Now I am going to show you the room of Philip the Second"; and leading us along the passage by which the Ambassadors were introduced, he opened a door, and we stood in the apartment of the King. It was not a secret chamber, but it was a very retired one, at an inner corner of the Palace. This was the lion's den, from which the slightest growl set all Europe in fear: for its occupant was in the sixteenth century what Louis XIV. was in the seventeenth, though ruling a greater dominion, and with more absolute sway.

This was the King into whose private apartment we were now suddenly introduced. But this very fact caused a disappointment. A ruler who was greater than Emperor or Sultan, we should expect to find surrounded with a magnificence which was the symbol of his power. Yet to our amazement, the royal apartment is the poorest and meanest of all that are shown in the Escorial. The floor is of brick, and the walls are bare, without a single ornament except a picture of the Virgin. In a small side-room, like an alcove, is his writing-desk. In this inkstand which I take in my hand, he dipped his pen when he signed a decree that might be executed on the other side of the globe. This is his portfolio—a simple wooden affair, which could be folded up like a checker-board, and was apparently made for use in a camp, as it is the very same which he had at the Battle of St. Quentin, and on which perhaps he recorded his vow to build a Palace for God and (this may explain the bareness of the room in which he lived) *a hut for himself!* In this room are kept his one chair and the two stools on which alternately he rested his gouty leg. To the adorers of monarchy it may seem presumption in an ordinary mortal, and a Republican at that, to sit in a royal seat; but the old custodian, with an eye to an extra fee, drew aside the protecting screen, and I seated myself squarely in the chair of Philip the Second; and that I might even assume the very posture of “my predecessor,” stretched out a foot upon the same rest which had supported his; and indeed as he had two such rests for a change, I spread myself right and left, that I might lean upon both, and thus be doubly supported in my transient regal state. After this *extended* experience, I can testify that a royal seat is not always the most comfortable in the world. Instead of being a throne, or even a luxurious place of repose, it was made of hard board, without a

cushion; and the stools were positively disreputable; while his poor Secretary sat abjectly on a still lower seat, from which to listen humbly to his master's will. All this is so unlike a royal apartment, that one would take it for a back room in a castle, assigned to some prisoner of State who was doomed to separation from the world, rather than the chosen retreat of the Sovereign who ruled it. Yet within these blank walls, seated on that wooden chair, the greatest monarch of his age made his power felt in two hemispheres.

Here lived for fourteen years the most gloomy King that ever sat upon a throne. Shut up within these walls, he kept apart from his fellow-beings, coming in contact only (except with priests and monks) with his Ministers or the flatterers of his Court, or Ambassadors from abroad, the homage of all whom he received with the same indifference, never rewarding their incense even with a smile, or giving way to any such sign of weakness as might indicate that he cared for the praise of men. A King of this gloomy character could not make the royal household very cheerful. It could hardly have been a great pleasure in that day to be invited to this grim and solemn Court, on which his presence weighed like a nightmare. The life of Philip was so solitary that he could hardly be expected to have much sympathy with his fellow-beings. Those of the outer world he scarcely saw, and never in a way to excite in him any feeling of compassion. What were they to him? His it was to execute the will of God, no matter what destruction it caused. From this chamber he sent forth his decrees to all parts of the world—decrees often the most cruel—now to the Duke of Alva to crush the rising spirit of the Netherlands, and now to the fierce and fanatical masters of Mexico and Peru, giving them power to execute their bloody will, little heeding how much of

human misery the execution of his orders might involve. Having thus discharged his mind of the cares of State, having performed his public duties, he turned to what was his only relief—that of prayer. His apartment had been chosen close to the church, with a small oratory that had a window opening on the high altar, at which he could kneel and pray. When he was at his devotions, no one dared to disturb him. His life was as much that of a monk as a king. He slept in a monk's cell, and daily joined with them in their prayers. For this purpose he did not have to descend into the church: for he could pass along the gallery to the choir—a gallery so massive in its arches and their supporting columns, that it seems as if the whole had been tunnelled out of the living rock, like the galleries at Gibraltar. Along this corridor, where his footfall woke only the dull sound of the echoing stone, the King stole softly at the sound of the vesper-bell. When the two hundred monks of the monastery had filed into their places in the choir, he entered by a private door, and took his seat among them, as if he were one of the brethren. His "stall" was in the farthest corner, where he could not be observed, and yet could see and hear all, keeping his eye on the high altar, and joining fervently in the prayers for the living and the dead. There, as he bowed upon his knees, we may hope that his spirit was truly humbled under the spell of the place and the hour; that for once he forgot that he was king in the presence of Him who was King of kings and Lord of lords.

Philip lived in the Escorial fourteen years to a day. But to kings as to meaner men, the last hour must come. He was in Madrid when he was seized with the fatal illness, and he insisted on being carried back to the Escorial. Fifty-three days he lay dying, during which he suffered in mind as in body. Priests and confessors stood

round him, ready to absolve him from his sins ; but that did not relieve his conscience. With all that he had done for the Church, he was haunted by a fear that he had committed some deadly sin, for which he should be condemned at the final bar. He had doomed his fellow-creatures to death : what if they should rise up against him, and call upon God for judgment? Doubts and fears pressed upon him as he drew near the final hour. It was but a little group that could be gathered in the oratory where he had been wont to pray, and even to these he was oblivious. The window was opened into the church, and he had no eyes for anything but what was *there*. Claspings in his hand the crucifix which his father, Charles V., pressed to his dying lips, with his agonized gaze fixed on the high altar, the soul of Philip the Second passed to the presence of God.

What shall we say of such a man? That he was "the greatest and meanest" of mankind? No : he was far from being the greatest, and yet he had great qualities, great force of will, great persistence in his designs, and great equanimity in victory or defeat. It was no ordinary self-control that would not permit him to rise from his knees even to hear the tidings of the victory of Lepanto, which saved Christendom from the Turk ; and it was no common firmness that could receive the news of the destruction of the Armada (which had cost him eighteen years of preparation, and hundreds of millions of money) without moving a muscle, only dropping a philosophical observation about the vicissitudes of human fortune, and thanking God that if one Armada was destroyed, he had still the means to build another.

Judged by his devotion to the Church, Philip was one of the most religious of men. He was exact in his observances ; he fasted and prayed and submitted to

penances ; though suffering a disease which often caused agony, he allowed himself no indulgences ; he sat in a hard chair and slept on a hard bed, and was more rigid and exacting than any confessor towards himself.

And yet this cold, impassive man, who allowed himself no pleasures, and whose self-denials, if rightly directed, might have made the happiness of millions, was one of the worst men that ever sat upon a throne. Few men can be named in history who have caused more misery to the human race. He ruined his country by his persecutions and his wars ; he sent thousands of the best men in Spain to the stake without a twinge of remorse ; while beyond the seas his brutal soldiery, unchecked by him, committed every crime in the name of the Prince of Peace ! Thus he shed blood like water, both in his own unhappy country and in the ends of the earth. After all this, how can we help feeling that it was a just retribution—if it be true, as historians tell us—that on his death-bed he suffered the torments of hell, since under the government of God it is the inexorable law that “he shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy”?

I do not wish to linger in the Escorial : it is too dark and gloomy. But there is one feature which needs to be added to complete the picture of the place. We have seen the room in which Philip the Second lived and died ; we may now descend into the crypt in which his body rests, with others of the royal dead. Charles the Fifth abdicated his throne the year before his death, and retired to the Convent of Yuste in Spain, there to consider his latter end, and prepare for his departure. In this year of meditation, his thoughts were occupied with his own future, and seemed to be divided between the care of his body and the salvation of his soul. For the former he enjoined his son to prepare a royal burial-place. Philip

therefore included in his plan of the Escorial a Mausoleum into which should be gathered, generation after generation, the long and illustrious line of Spanish kings. This is the famous "Pantheon," which is an object of peculiar interest.

But how to obtain access to it, was the question. It was undergoing extensive alterations, during which visitors were rigidly excluded. The orders were peremptory, and I was told in Madrid that admission was "impossible." Even Mr. Curry had found, on a recent visit, that his official position did not avail to unbar the doors; and yet it was through him that I obtained what he had not obtained for himself. As his house is a place of social reunions which include many connected with the government, it was there that I met the Introducer of Ambassadors, to whom Mr. Curry preferred my request. He was very courteous, as Spanish officials generally are, and said that, although it was very difficult, he would do what he could. A day or two after he came to tell me that the Pantheon, which is in the crypt of the church, was, like the Monastery itself, under the care of a religious order, and that therefore he had brought me, as the most likely to be of service, a letter to the Prior, in which he had introduced me as "a learned American gentleman," and requested as a special favor that the doors which were shut in the face of the outside world, might be opened to me. Armed with this, Mr. Gulick and myself, after we had been through the Palace, presented ourselves at the door of the Monastery, and giving the letter to a young monk, asked him to take it to his Superior. In a few minutes he returned with it in his hand, and a direction that it should be shown to the official in charge of the works, whom we found in the corridor, and to whom we presented our "commission." He read it over carefully, and raising his eyes, acknowledged a request coming

from the Palace, and approved by the Prior, as an instruction which he could not disregard, and said that if we would meet him at two o'clock at a certain gate at the rear of the church, he would be there to open it for us, and would himself conduct us to what we had so much desired to see. At the appointed hour we were on the spot, where he had just arrived, and at once the heavy bolt was unlocked, the iron door swung open, and we descended into the Sepulchre of Kings.

The first portion of the crypt into which we were introduced, seemed quite new, or at least newly arranged—a sort of Annex to the Pantheon, which was greatly needed: for here, as in humbler burial-places, there are constant accessions to the number of the departed. "Death knocks alike at the palace gate and the cottage door," and here, as in country graveyards, where

"The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,"

there is a constant cry of "Room, room for the dead!" And so new forms, of the young as well as the old, are brought to the embrace of this royal, yet cold and silent, place of rest.

This addition to the Pantheon, the newer part, is much larger than the old, as here are deposited the remains of those members of the royal families who did *not* sit upon a throne. In Spain the order of precedence is strictly observed even in the grave, and the Pantheon, which is limited in size, is reserved only for kings and queens. It may be said to keep guard over the royal line as something sacred, not to be confused with anything of inferior blood, even if it be their own blood, and no one can pass its grim portal who has not in person sat upon a throne, or at least shared a throne with a king as his queen, or with a reigning queen as a king-consort. And not all queens are admitted, but those only who have been *the mothers of kings*.

Thus Philip the Second had four wives, of whom only one, the mother of Philip the Third, is buried in the Pantheon, while two others [one, "Bloody Mary," is buried in England] are retired to that part of the crypt which we are now entering, where they sleep only among princes and princesses. But if the dead could choose their resting place, one would think that they would prefer this outer court to the other. True, the Pantheon is more select, but it is darker and gloomier, as it is farther under ground, while here the pavement is but a few feet below the earth, so that it is within reach of light from the upper air, which, as it is admitted through windows of ground glass, rests softly on the white marble under which the dead repose. With such gleams of sunshine amid the shadows, the dead are nearer to the living world above them, and, one would think, might sleep more tranquilly than if buried in utter darkness.

One familiar with Spanish history would pause long before these sarcophagi, above which is inscribed upon the wall many a name associated with royal splendor. Here rest two of the wives of Philip the Second, each of whom, in her turn, presided over his gloomy Court. But here too are names which recall sad histories. Here sleeps the king's son, Don Carlos, whose unhappy fate suggested to Schiller the subject for a tragedy, but no blood-curdling scene upon the stage could equal the real tragedy of one who, born to a throne, was accused of having conspired against the life of his father, by whom he was imprisoned for years, and some believe finally put to death. Such are the tragedies which may be hidden within palace walls. Other histories there may have been less tragic, but hardly less pathetic, as where some princess, under royal disfavor (for no place in the world is more full of heart-burnings, of pride, envy, and all uncharitableness,