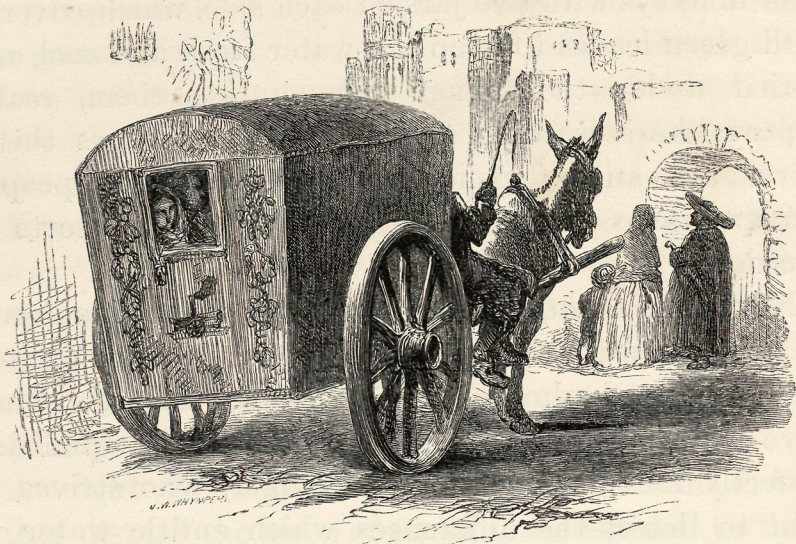


their donkeys with two jars on each side, which, covered with green leaves to keep the water fresh and cool, and buried under the foliage surmounting them, really appear like a walking forest. The Aguadors themselves are an independent off-hand set of people, some of them very amusing, and full of all sorts of anecdote.

Never was a nation so fond of water as the Spaniards, and the quantity they get through would have excited the unqualified admiration of Priessnitz himself. They have a variety of expressions to define its qualities, perfectly inexplicable to the stranger, who strives in vain to detect the differences which entitle water to such epithets as rich, and poor, fat and thin ; and change of water is here the regular phrase instead of change of air, and water, as a beverage, seems to be regarded with as much veneration by the Spaniards, as the Moors looked on it as a means of purification ; in the latter sense the inhabitants of Andalusia do not make much use of it. The scanty accommodation afforded for the use of water externally is rather striking to the traveller. In travelling by diligence he may notice two or three basins arranged in the dining-room, or passage leading to it, for the accommodation of those who arrive and wish to indulge in the extraordinary luxury of washing their hands ; but this is only where a higher degree of civilisation has been reached. In small inns in out-of-the-way towns, a barber's basin is sometimes all you can obtain for your ablutions ; and although water to drink may be procured here with greater facility and purity than in any other country, water to wash is a very difficult article to obtain.





A GALERA.

## CHAPTER V.

Sierras que cubre el sempiterno hielo,  
 Donde Darro y Genil beben su vida ;  
 Valles salubres, trasparente cielo  
 De la Alpujarra aun mal conocida.

ZORRILLA.

It was a barren scene, and wild,  
 Where naked cliffs were rudely piled ;  
 But ever and anon, between,  
 Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green.

SCOTT.

ENVIRONS OF GRANADA—LA ZUBIA—STA. FE—COLUMBUS—SOTO DE ROMA—HARVEST SCENES—  
 ELVIRA—COUNCIL OF ILLIBERIS—VIZNAR—ALFACAR—BOTANISING—EXCURSION TO THE SIERRA  
 —SUNRISE IN THE HILLS—DORNAJO SPRING—PICACHO DE VELETA—MOUNTAIN BIVOUAC  
 —MONACHIL—THE ALPUJARRAS—LAST STRUGGLE OF THE MOORS—PADUL—SPANISH ROAD-  
 MAKING—LANJARON—ORGIBA—THE MULA HACEN—POQUEIRA—RETURN—DEPARTURE FOR  
 SEVILLE—LOJA—LONELY JOURNEY—THE GALERA—ALCALÁ DE GUADAIRA.

HOWEVER interesting the town of Granada may be, its neighbourhood offers many points fraught with souvenirs of the past ; and the lovely summer evenings may be well employed in rides through the vega, while those who delight in collecting wild flowers, and studying the botany, or the geology of the country in



which they are residing, will find a rich harvest in its wild sierras.

About a league from the town at the foot of the Sierra Nevada, where numerous torrents flow down from its sides to water the vega with their melted snows, stands a small village called La Zubia, the white belfry of its church rising above the olive yards and orchards which surround it. La Zubia, for those who care not for the past, is nothing more than one of the many villages dotted about the vega, consisting of small whitewashed houses clustered round the church, intersected by water-courses, through which the torrents are led to fertilise the plain. In its streets may be seen the mouldering walls of some ancient mansion, once the residence of proud Castilian nobles, whose arms, carved in stone over the keystone of the Moorish arches, seem placed as the seal of conquest on the abode of the vanquished foe.

To those who love the story of the past this now neglected village recalls a bright page in Granada's history. To the left, as you enter the town, is a large garden, once belonging to a Franciscan convent, now converted into a farmhouse, and the owner will lead you to a small open temple by the side of a gigantic bay tree, and tell you that here Isabella sat when she came to have a nearer view of Granada than could be obtained from the encampment of the Christian host. It was a charming evening when we first went there, the sun was setting in a flood of gold behind the mountains of Elvira and Parapanda. Before us rose Granada, on her amphitheatre of hills, crowned by the towers of her Palace Fortress; to our right, the Picacho still robed in its snowy mantle; far away behind, the height where Boabdil sighed forth his last farewell to the home of his ancestors: all before and



around, the vega enclosed by its framework of mountains, its fields at this season teeming with life, the men at work gathering in the harvest, and the yellow hue of the stubble contrasting with the verdant green of the tall hemp.

Here, on this same spot, the peerless Isabella, surrounded by the flower of her chivalrous host, gazed upon the city she so long had coveted, and which was soon to be the reward of her untiring energy and perseverance; the brightest jewel in the crown of the two Castiles: for the conquest of Granada, which united under one sovereign all the separate kingdoms of Spain, consolidated the Spanish monarchy. Yet this union, far from laying the foundation of the welfare of the kingdom, seems but to have precluded its fall; energies, which had been all concentrated on the extirpation of the Mahommedans, were allowed no time to be devoted to the improvement of the newly acquired territories. Distracted by the golden vision of the New World, paralysed by the blighting influence of the Inquisition, the internal state of Spain can hardly be said to have improved materially from that period.

The Vega of Granada is well cultivated now, but its inhabitants have only availed themselves of the admirable system of irrigation bequeathed them by the Moors; in many instances, they have neglected this instead of improving upon it; and much that was like a garden in their hands, has become an arid desert under their conquerors.

With a population totally disproportioned to the extent of land in the Peninsula, the inhabitants can easily obtain from the ground sufficient for their subsistence; satisfied with little, their wants are quickly supplied, and they have hardly any inducement to exert themselves. With governments, the members of which



only think of enriching themselves at the public expense, how can the state of things be expected to improve? They change, but of what avail is change where bad is only replaced by worse? Office in this country is a mere gratification of personal ambition; the advancement of a small coterie who seek their own individual profit, and, once installed in power, abandon the principles they used as a stepping-stone. There is no such thing as public spirit in Spain; their revolutions are not the expressions of popular feeling; they are only got up by particular parties out of spite for some insult they have received, or envy at their adversaries having too long enjoyed the sweets of office; but, alas! so corrupt does everything appear in the present day, that an honest man ceases to continue one so soon as he is dragged into the fatal vortex of the court. Could Isabella behold the present state of things under the reign of the second of her name; could she, who approached so nearly to perfection, both as a sovereign and a woman, behold the events now passing, she of whose ministers it may truly be said, as the greatest compliment, that they were worthy of their royal mistress; she who watched over the welfare of every portion of her subjects with such untiring solicitude; what would be her feelings to see the Spain of the present day? We may drop a veil over such a mournful contemplation, nor seek to draw comparisons between the reigns of the first and second Isabella.

The presence of the Catholic sovereigns so near the town provoked the Moorish knights to a slight skirmish, which ended in a serious conflict. To commemorate the events of the day a convent was erected on the spot where the queen viewed Granada: the building still stands, but its inhabitants were expelled in 1835; its present possessor still, however, preserves the laurel



planted, as they say, by her own hands. From La Zubia a ride across the vega leads to Santa Fé, the town that was built after the fire which consumed the Christian camp, to impress on the inhabitants of Granada how firm and unalterable were the resolves of their enemy. The canvas walls were speedily converted into ramparts of brick and stone, and here was signed the treaty of capitulation ; a treaty made to be violated by the Christians, who ought to have been the first to set an example of better faith.

Here, Columbus learned from Isabella that the crown of Castile would venture much for the carrying out his projects of discovery ; here, the realisation of his hopes broke upon the enthusiast, and his heart was brightened by finding one who could sympathise with his ideas, and not think them the dreams of a madman ; and here Torquemada suggested the expulsion of the Jews from the Spanish dominions, the decree ordaining which was finally signed and sealed within the walls of Granada. We can hardly imagine the gentle hand of the humane and merciful Isabel signing a decree which should plunge so many thousands into misery, and yet that same hand ordained, also, the establishment of the Inquisition. So far can fanaticism pervert the minds of even the purest to sanction the vilest cruelties, under the mistaken idea of furthering a religion which preached peace on earth, and goodwill towards men.

Santa Fé now bears no trace of having witnessed such important events in history ; a wretched village with four straight streets crossing, diverge from its Plaza, in the centre of which stands a church, whose two small towers form conspicuous objects in all the distant views of the vega. Between them is the head of a Moor, in stone, transfixed by a spear, commemorating the heroic combat of Garcilaso de la



Vega with the Moorish chieftain Tarfe. An hour's ride from Santa Fé, over the flat plain, brings you to Soto de Roma, the estate granted by the Spanish Government to Wellington, in reward of services which the nation seem most unwilling to acknowledge. The debt of gratitude is a heavy one to pay, and Spanish debts are not famed in general for being regularly liquidated. There is nothing to see at Soto de Roma beyond the usual style of Spanish villages, nor does the Duke's property appear much more thriving than that of his neighbours.

This is a pretty ride on a July evening, when the harvest is getting in ; for then all is life and animation in the vega ; the corn has been cut, and the people are busily employed in the fields, treading it out on the circular threshing-floors, paved with stones for this purpose. Small sheds are run up, the coarse matting supported by poles forming a shelter from the burning rays of the sun, and a sleeping-place for those who remain to guard the corn at night. Near this shed are grouped the lively peasants, the women and children preparing the *gazpacho*, a favourite dish of cucumbers, bread, garlic, oil, vinegar and water, which cools and refreshes the parched labourers ; the young horses are driven round and round, to teach them the work for which they are destined ;—all form a picture of rural enjoyment and activity which is not often seen in this land of the *dolce far niente*. The operation itself is very striking ; the men standing on small planks of wood, with sharp iron teeth beneath, and driving their horses rapidly round over the sheaves of corn, which are laid on the circular "era," thus bruising out the grain, which is afterwards winnowed by being thrown up into the air. Sometimes a small car is substituted for the common plank, on which



two can sit, and this affords great amusement to the young people, driving round and round, while an occasional upset and a roll in the corn contribute to the merriment of the party. The scene is completed by the large heavy carts constantly arriving, bringing the corn drawn by the patient oxen, who never vary their pace, following their driver, who walks before them with a long stick across his shoulder, by which he guides them, every movement of which they follow; all this combines to present a charming picture of rural life, brightened by the gay dresses of the peasantry and the glow of a southern land. All look happy and joyous, and the guitars enliven the whole with their lively notes.

And then as night approaches, all nature seems rejoiced at the freshness of the evening air. Now is the time for enjoyment; these evenings are indeed delicious, more particularly if in riding home the moon comes forth in all her glory, shining in the dark firmament, and diffusing that sweet softened light which soothes the senses after the burning heat of day; the fine outline of the Sierra rises in front, the lights in the distant town glitter like stars, and all around, the vega appears on fire; the stubble is blazing on the fields whence the corn has been removed, thick wreaths of smoke curl upwards, now bursting into flame, now smouldering on the plain; and although this denotes that man is actively engaged in preparing his fields to yield a second crop, all nature seems at peace after the heat and brightness of the day.

After the corn ripens and the hemp is cut, the vega begins to assume a burnt and calcined look, a penalty from which even these well irrigated plains are not exempt, exposed as they are to an almost tropical sun. In September the Indian corn ripens, but the verdant



patches of this graceful crop barely suffice to tinge it once more with green. The effect of this beautiful plant is very much injured by the custom of cutting off the upper leaves, to give food to their horses before even the grain ripens.

Returning from Soto de Roma, the road sweeps round the base of the volcanic peaks of the Sierra Elvira, that rises like an advanced guard in the plain, detached and isolated from the adjacent mountains. Its arid slopes contrast with the smiling vega around, and yet here, on its southern side, stood the great Roman city of Illiberis. It gradually declined before the superior advantages offered by the rising town of Granada, and now it has entirely disappeared, and not a trace remains even to mark its site.

On a rising ground, behind that which the city is supposed to have occupied, a large cemetery was discovered some few years ago ; upwards of two hundred sepulchres were opened, and some vestiges of the foundations of ancient buildings were traced ; most of the sepulchres contained skeletons. Signet rings, rich bracelets of gold and silver, amphoræ and other relics of antiquity were likewise discovered ; these however have all vanished, the jewellers' shops having been found by the peasants of the neighbouring villages the most lucrative way of disposing of their treasures, and they in turn have melted them down, regardless of anything but their intrinsic value, for the manufacture of modern ornaments. The sepulchres having been rifled of their contents, and afforded a profitable occupation during a year of drought, the earth has again covered them, and the passer-by would hardly notice anything remarkable in the small hollows which are dotted over this desolate piece of ground, with no habitations in the neighbourhood, save the wretched



village of Atarfe, at some little distance on the edge of the vega.

In Illiberis was held the first council of the Christian Church in Spain. It is supposed to have taken place early in the fourth century, Osio, Bishop of Córdoba, having assisted at it, the same who presided in 325 at the celebrated Council of Nice. Nineteen Spanish bishops were present; many of its decrees were very rigorous, and some might be enforced in these days among the present inhabitants of the Peninsula with great advantage. The custom of lighting candles in the cemeteries on certain anniversaries, and that of prostrating themselves before images and paintings, were strictly forbidden in its canons; the latter more especially, as tending to the revival of Pagan superstitions. The early Fathers of the Church saw this, and wisely forbade the introduction or the continuance of a custom which, in the minds of the uneducated, might degenerate, and beyond question has degenerated in this country, into gross abuses.

One of the prettiest rides in the neighbourhood of Granada is to Viznar, a village on the side of the mountains to the north of the town. Here, towards the end of the last century, one of the Archbishops of Granada built a country palace in a pretty situation; Granada itself however being concealed from it by a projecting hill. The rooms are large and spacious, and the façade towards the garden is painted with the rudest frescoes from the life of Don Quixote. It now belongs to a private individual. The road above Viznar winds along the sides of the Sierra de Alfacar to the Fuente Grande, as the spring is called which rises on the mountain-side; and a more lovely spring than this it would be difficult to find. The water bubbles up from a gravelly bed as cool and pure as