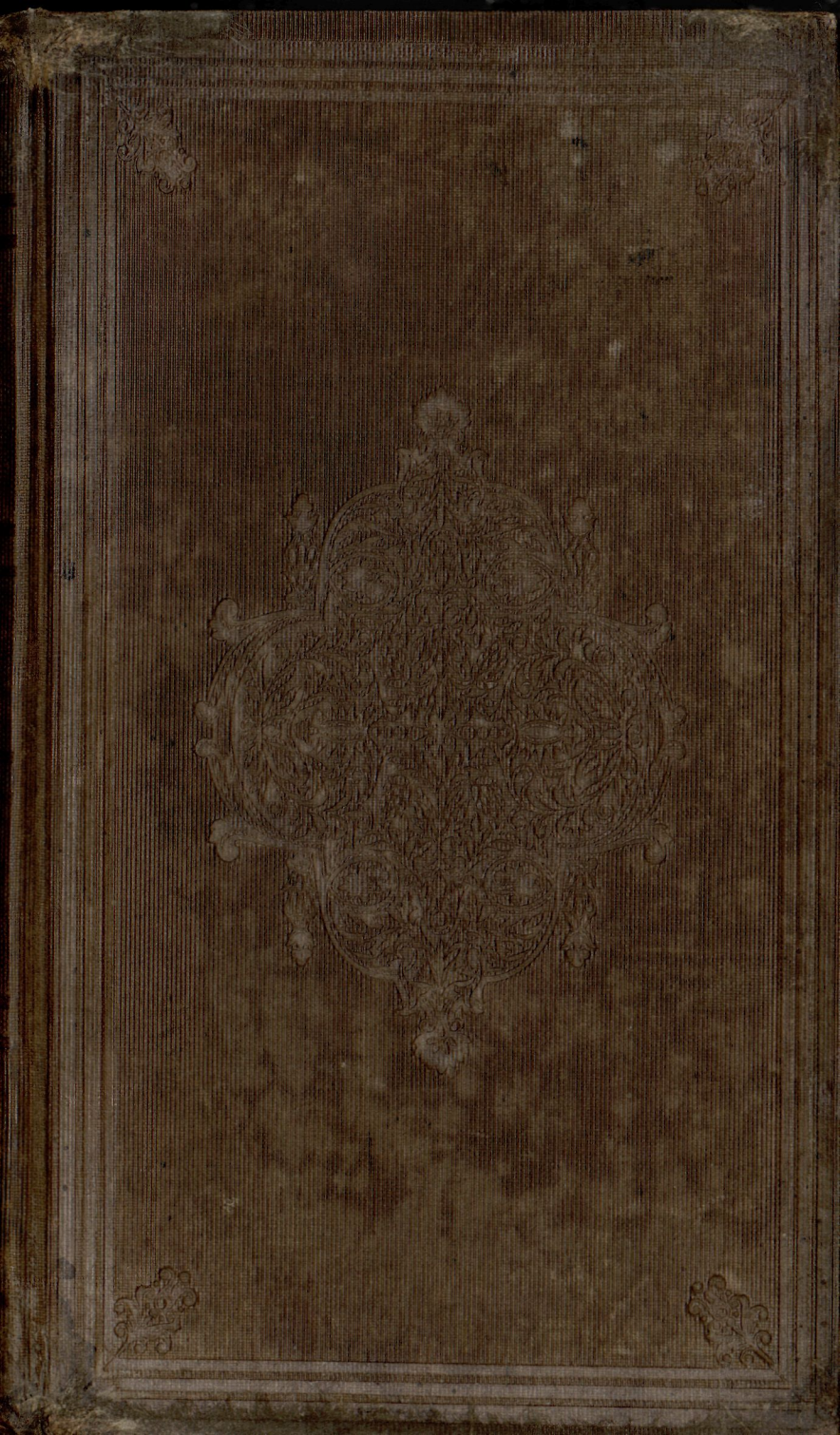

SPAIN

S.T. WALLIS

TICKNOR & CO.

Alex. E. Lyon
Toronto

SPAIN:

HER

INSTITUTIONS, POLITICS,

AND

PUBLIC MEN.

A SKETCH,

By S. T. WALLIS,
AUTHOR OF "GLIMPSES OF SPAIN."

BOSTON:
TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS.
M DCCC LIII.

CAMBRIDGE:
METCALF AND COMPANY,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

TO

THE HONORABLE JOHN GLENN,

U. S. JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND,

IN

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF

MANY KINDNESSES.

PREFACE.

When writing the "Glimpses of Spain," the author supposed it scarcely possible that he should ever return to that country. The work, however, was still in the press, when he was honored by an invitation, from the Secretary of the Interior of the United States, to visit Madrid upon an important professional errand. The offer was too flattering to be declined, and the present volume is one of the results of its acceptance.

Though the author did not occupy any recognized relation to the Spanish government, the nature of his duties, and the intercourse and connections resulting from his position, afforded him many and excellent opportunities of knowledge and observation. He does not profess to

have availed himself of his advantages as fully as he might, had his duties been less engrossing; but he trusts it will be found, that they have enabled him to give the work which follows a less ephemeral character than that of an ordinary book of travels. In the attempt to do this, he has sought to communicate, as far as practicable, such information in regard to Spain, as is not, to his knowledge, accessible elsewhere.

Much of this volume was prepared, as the whole should have been, soon after the writer's return to the United States. Having had no control over the circumstances which delayed its completion, he has endeavored to countervail them by keeping pace with the intermediate progress of Spanish affairs, and is persuaded that he has thus been able to present, on the whole, a fair contemporary view of his subject. The reader will, of course, make allowance for the generalities of both statement and reflection which it was impossible to avoid in a sketch. The favorable reception of his former work gives the author some confidence, that the present volume will not meet with the less consideration, because he has again attempted to portray the national characteristics of the Spaniards,

without underrating their intelligence, depreciating their morals, or caricaturing their manners and religion.

It would be unpardonable to send forth the record of a most agreeable sojourn in the Spanish capital, without acknowledging the indebtedness of the author to the officers of the United States Legation there, and especially to the Hon. Mr. Barringer, for all the pleasure and advantage which courtesy and kindness could give to personal and official intercourse.

BALTIMORE, January, 1853.

CONTENTS.

V.

VI.

VII.

VIII.

IX.

X.

XI.

XII.

XIII.

XIV.

XV.

XVI.

XVII.

XVIII.

XIX.

XX.

XXI.

XXII.

XXIII.

XXIV.

XXV.

XXVI.

XXVII.

XXVIII.

XXIX.

XXX.

ERRATA.

Page	57,	line	2, 3,	for	"Plutarch's time,"	read	"Plutarch's tale."
"	83,	"	22,	"	"*per orden*,"	"	"*por orden*."
"	350,	"	7,	"	"*Margato*,"	"	"*Maragato*."

I.

Journey to Madrid.

It was in the beginning of December, 1849, that I approached the Pyrenees, from Bayonne, for the first time. Had it been a matter of discretion with me, I should, of course, have selected a season for crossing them, in which the proprieties of the barometer and thermometer would have been more likely to be observed. The weather, however, was not the only thing that promised disagreeable contingencies. The whole gossip of the hotel population in Bayonne was terrible with tales of robbery upon the highway to the Spanish capital. My previous visit to the Peninsula had made me rather sceptical, it is true, in such matters, but now the details were so vivid and circumstantial, that they could hardly be doubted without flying in the face of all road-side probabilities. A fat gentleman, at the *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel du Commerce, assured me, — with that air of certainty not to be questioned which belongs to age in its combination with the apoplectic diathesis, — that to his knowledge the diligence had been

robbed near Lerma a few days before. The passengers, he said, had been made to lie shivering in the middle of the road, with their faces downwards, and with the scantiest possible allowance of under-clothes, until the thieves had made off with their outer garments and valuables, and the best mules of the team. "And so," added the old gentleman, helping himself to two cutlets, "they were many hours without any thing to eat!" It was not, therefore, without some chill forebodings, in spite of myself, that I surrendered my fortunes to the lumbering vehicle which was to bear them. As I looked at my watch, to see the time of our departure, it was tenderly and sadly, I own, as at the face of an old friend, from whom I soon might part in sorrow and for ever. On the 12th of December, nevertheless, at four in the morning, I awoke to find my journey and misgivings of seventy hours triumphantly at an end. I was at Madrid, in the huge hostelry of the Postas Peninsulares on the Calle de Alcalá, sorely exercised in mind and battered in body, but none the worse in estate, beyond the usual and lawful pillage of custom-house officers, landlords, and postilions. Whether the presence of two well-appointed *guardias civiles*, who had joined us some stages from the capital, had any thing to do with our safety, I am not clairvoyant enough to know; but I made up my mind, as I advise all travellers in Spain to do, that thenceforward and for ever no story of highwaymen — though as long and romantic as the Chronicle of the Cid, and as authentic as the American news in Galignani — should prevent me from pursuing my business or pleasure in the Peninsula, with a light heart and as heavy a purse as needful.

The greater part of what attracted my attention on the journey, I saw again, in a brighter and more genial light, on my return. Only the stern mountain passes of Pancorvo and Somosierra seemed to derive a lonelier and sublimer wildness from the snow and leafless trees, and the congenial, tempest-laden clouds above them. As to the "entertainment for man" with which we were favored, under the auspices of the Postas Peninsulares in whose diligence I travelled, it is a matter of duty to those who may follow me to say, that it was as detestable as can be imagined. The humblest *ventorrillo* on the Andalusian hills, where I partook of game and salad in former days, while the fleas took reprisals from me, was a palace for a Sybarite, in comparison with some of the *paradores* into which we were now compelled to burrow. A cordon of such establishments would do more, I think, than martello towers and floating batteries, to check the march of an invading army, from any land where creature comforts are prized as they deserve.

But we were at Madrid, and, strange to note, in that proverbially clear, transparent atmosphere, there hung over the stately city what a stout curate, who dismounted with us, called *una niebla del Demonio*,—a fog of the Devil! If I had been the author of the "Pillars of Hercules," I should have felt it my duty, as a Scot, to maintain, against all diabolical pretensions whatever, that the mist was a countryman of mine, and that I had seen its relations in Auld Reekie. As it was, I followed the legal maxim of believing every man in his business, and, on the faith of his clerical friend, gave credit to the *Demonio* accordingly.

II.

Lodging-houses, Lodging, and Life in Madrid. — Servants, &c.

The Arcipreste de Hita — upon the principle of taking the lesser evil where we have a choice — commends us to the smallest women for our loves and wives : —

> "Del mal, tomar lo menos, díselo el Sabidor,
> Porende de las mugeres la menor es la mejor."

He will be a wise man who reads the principle backwards, and remembers that the Fonda de las Postas Peninsulares, being the largest tavern in Madrid, is of necessity the worst. It is quite an imposing establishment — when seen from the street, I was about to say; but the interior will impose upon you quite as much, in its way, if you will give it an opportunity. The edifice belongs or belonged to the Marques de la Torrecilla, and is adorned, as to its front, with sundry blazonries in churrigueresque, which aptly symbolize the highly feudal character of what you meet within. That it is considered quite a grand affair, and worthy of this attempt to forewarn the unwary in regard to it, will

be seen by the commendation which Madoz bestows on it, in his *Diccionario Geográfico, Estadístico, Histórico*, a work of really great merit, which I shall have occasion to speak of hereafter. "All its apartments," says the patriotic Don Pascual, "which are many and good, enjoy excellent light and ventilation, and have just undergone notable improvement, as well in the papering and painting of the walls and ceilings, as in the complete array of furniture which adorns them. Its guests will find the service exact, the table choicely provided, and the beds and linen exquisitely neat." I should be happy if I had room for the whole passage in the original, if it were only to show, as a philological curiosity, how much a beautiful language can make out of a bad, dark, mouldy caravansera. The *fonda*, rhetoric apart, is served by Italians, whose national instincts are a guaranty against cleanliness, as all the world knows. The ground-floor is dedicated to the four-footed servants of the company, which of course secures to the rest of the mansion a liberally distributed odor of the stable and a lively circulation of fleas and horse-boys. The diligences, of which it is the great centre and emporium, arrive and depart at all hours of the night, especially at those when people with good consciences and unpacked trunks enjoy their sweetest dreams; — and let not any man with nerves delude himself by thinking that the cup of tribulation has visited his lips, till there has risen on his slumbers that forty-mule-power chorus of shouting, cursing, and whip-cracking, for which every departure or arrival is an awful signal. At the *table d'hôte*, which has considerable pretension, and which you reach through long,

dark passages, dreary to tread, I found scarce any visitors but *commis voyageurs*, who, to judge from their manners and conversation, were, I am sure, the worst of the beasts not enumerated in the Apocalypse.

It will be readily imagined, that such quarters were not long to be endured; but, although I speedily fell among kind friends, who appreciated the sadness of my lot, and were willing to liberate me if they could, Madrid is not a place where a man may find pleasant lodging-houses as readily as the illustrious Manchegan fell upon adventures. "*No es este ramo en el que mas sobresale Madrid*," candidly confesses Mellado, in his "Traveller's Guide," — the tavern department is not that in which Madrid chiefly excels! The Spaniards themselves, who are exceedingly simple in their habits, and can get comfortably through the coldest winter by a dexterous combination of the *brasero*, the cloak, and the sunshine, will cheerfully stow themselves away, wherever there is a mat on the tiled floor, and a large window to let in the rays. A few chairs and a writing-table, with an alcove, and a plain but tidy bed, are "*lo que hay que desear*," — all that a man could wish for lodging. For diet, — be it good taste or bad, — they are well content with the national *puchero*, more or less refined, — thinking, with Governor Panza, that, "in the diversity of things whereof the said *ollas* are composed, a man cannot help stumbling upon something that will please him and do him good." Nor is that dish altogether unworthy the great Sancho's praise, which may be expanded, if you will, into a compendium of natural history and botany, or be decent and respectable with only bacon and *garbanzos*. En-