

human assistance, while we amused ourselves by walking backward and forward on a cold, bleak, desolate heath, with only one object in view, and that a monumental cross. In about two hours we advanced a mile to the village of St. Miguel de las Duenas. Here there is no posada, and we are therefore at the house of the Barber.

A village Barber is always a great man, particularly in Spain, where their regular surgeons probably are little less ignorant. I have been looking over our host's library, it contains a little about physic, and a great deal about the Virgin Mary. Of his medical books, I believe the only one ever heard of in England, is Dioscorides, in an old Spanish translation! What an excellent country to break a leg in. However, if our friendly host be not a good surgeon, he is certainly a good Catholic. Over his books is a print called Our Lady of Seven Sorrows; it represents the Virgin Mary pierced through by seven swords, while Christ is lying dead in her lap. To such a print you will

naturally think nothing could be affixed more suitable than the song of her Seven Good Joys. There is however under it a representation of the linen in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped up our Saviour's body, and which retaining a miraculous likeness, is highly revered in these countries; not without cause, for through the merits of this Holy Napkin, or Santo Sudario, every time a certain prayer is repeated, a soul is released from Purgatory, by permission of Clement VIII. If the Pope should be in the right, you will do good by reading it; if not, you may at least gratify your curiosity.

Oracion del Santo Sudario, para levrar una
Alma del Purgatorio.

Senor, haviendo nos dexado senales de su dolorosa passion sobre el santo Sudario, en el qual sacratissimo cuerpo fue sepultado por Joseph, concede nos por su misericordia y los merecimientos de su muerte y sepultura, podemos alcanzar la gloria de su triunphante Resur-

reccion. Pues vive y regna con el Padre en la unidad del Spiritu santo por todos los siglos de los siglos. Amen.

The Prayer of the Holy Napkin to deliver a Soul from Purgatory.

Lord, who hast left us the marks of thy dolorous passion upon the Holy Napkin, in which thy most sacred body was buried by Joseph, grant that through thy mercy and the merits of thy death and burial, we may partake of the glory of thy triumphant Resurrection. Thou who livest with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Of the nature of our Host's theological library, you may judge by this chance specimen. A holy man, reading the Song of Solomon, came to the seventh verse of the fourth chapter. "My beloved is pure and without spot." Musing on these words, he fell into a deep sleep, and beheld the Virgin Mary, in a vision, with all her retinue of Cherubim and Seraphim.

They repeated the verse, “ My beloved is pure and without spot,” and a more divine voice immediately added, “ etiam in conceptione,” even in conception. This, says the author, is an irrefragable proof of the immaculate conception of the Mother of God !

I ought to observe that this has nothing to do with the Orthodox and Arian tenet of the Immaculate Conception. It is only to prove the Franciscan dogma, that the Virgin Mary herself was born without the stain of Original Sin.

In England the red petticoat only peeps through a covering of lawn, but here the Babylonian walks the street in full dress scarlet. In England, where O’Leary is a Popish Priest, and Geddes chooses to call himself a Catholic, I have felt myself inclined to think that the absurdities of Popery may have been exaggerated : but here, “ the serious folly of Superstition stares every man of sense in the face.”*

* Mary Woolstonecraft.

At the entrance of this village stands a tree, two of whose branches had the misfortune to grow somewhat in the shape of a cross. The top and the limbs were therefore lopt off, and a face carved on it, similar to what I have seen boys cut upon a turnip; this done, it is an object of devotion. Our host has been just catechising my uncle: do you believe in God? to be sure I do. And do you believe in Jesus Christ? Certainly, replied my uncle. But ask him, said his son-in-law, in a whisper loud enough to be heard, ask him if he believes in the Virgin Mary?

An Irish Priest has the following passage in his Spanish sermon. "Many reasons have been assigned for the earthquake and darkness at the crucifixion, but to me this appears the only rational cause. The Blessed Virgin, who always in humility was accustomed to look upon the ground, lifted up her eyes to the cross. Deprived of the light of her eyes, the earth trembled, and the sun hid himself, ashamed to behold superior radiance."

There is a large Nunnery near us, where we have heard the Nuns sing. The chapel grating is by no means close, and when the service was over, they came close to it, probably to gratify their own curiosity as well as ours. Some of them were handsome, and I saw none who either by their size or their countenance indicated austerity. This is a beautiful spot. The room I am in commands a tranquil and pleasing view: A little stream flows near the house; the convent lies to the right, and we look over a rich valley to the high mountains near us. Where we are to sleep I know not, for our host's daughter and her husband sleep in the kitchen, and in this, the only other room, the barber, his wife, and child!

The only face for which I have conceived any affection in Spain, is a dried pig's, in the kitchen below, and alas! this is a hopeless passion!

Christmas-day, six o'clock in the evening.

In the cold and comfortless room of a posada, having had no dinner but what we made in the

coach, fatigued, and out of spirits, a pleasant situation ! I have been walking above three hours up this immense mountain, very agreeable no doubt for the goats who browse in the vallies, and the lizards and wolves who inhabit the rest of it ! We slept last night in the room with the barber, his wife, and child. At midnight they all went to Cock-mass. At day-break I had the pleasure of wishing my fellow travellers a merry Christmas. Our prospect of a Christmas dinner made us laugh, for you must know that in the downfall of the coach we sustained a grievous loss. Our travelling soup had come all the way from Bamonde, slung under the carriage in a pitcher, and at every stage we had a new edition, with additions and improvements. You may smile at our loss, but when

Faint and wearily

The way worn traveller

Treads the mazes to the mountain's top,

a warm dish of soup in a cold day, was a serious thing to lose. Homer says, "a good dinner is no bad thing." Our road lay through a fertile

valley till we had past the town of Benveveria; where we past by one of the best posadas on the road. We stopped at the village of Torre, a wild and delightful spot, where the wine was not unlike Burgundy. From thence we ascended the mountain to Manzanar. You can scarcely picture to yourself a scene more wild; descents sloping to the mountain glens covered with shrubs and furze, little streams crossing the road, and rocks on which the grey lizards were basking in great numbers; sometimes we looked over the hills we had ascended to the fertile vale where St. Miguel de las Duenas stands; and the heights beyond by Ponferrada; more frequently the windings of the mountains bounded our view; it was pleasant just at the close of evening, to see the lonely posada of Manzanar; a herd of goats were feeding on a green spot near the house, and I cannot tell you what comfortable feelings their sounds excited. We heard the report of a gun near the posada, and were told that the master of the house had fired it at a wolf. We have seen none of these animals, but I have observed

a piece of wolf's skin laid on the neck of all the oxen in their carts, since we entered Leon. The loneliness of the road, and the recollections the day excited, suggested the following lines. You will like them, because they simply express natural feelings.

How many a heart is happy at this hour
 In England! brightly o'er the cheerful hall
 Beams the heap'd hearth, and friends and kindred meet,
 And the glad Mother round her festive board
 Beholds her children, separated long
 Amid the world's wide way, assembled now,
 And at the sight Affection lightens up
 With smiles, the eye that Age has long bedimm'd.
 I do remember when I was a child,
 How my young heart, a stranger then to Care,
 With transport leapt upon this holy day,
 As o'er the house, all gay with evergreens,
 From friend to friend with eager speed I ran,
 Bidding a merry Christmas to them all.
 Those years are past: their pleasures and their pains
 Are now like yonder convent-crested hill,
 That bounds the distant prospect, dimly seen,
 Yet pictur'd upon Memory's mystic glass,
 In faint fair hues. A weary traveller now
 I journey o'er the desert mountain track
 Of Leon: wilds all drear and comfortless,
 Where the grey lizards, in the noon-tide sun,
 Sport on their rocks, and where the goatherd starts,
 Roused from his midnight sleep, and shakes to hear

The wolf's loud yell, and falters as he calls
 On Saints to save. Hence of the friends I think
 Who now perchance remember me, and pour
 The glass of votive friendship. At the name
 Will not thy cheek, Beloved! wear the hue
 Of Love? and in mine EDITH's eye the tear
 Tremble? I will not wish thee not to weep;—
 There is strange pleasure in Affection's tears—
 And he who knows not what it is to wake
 And weep at midnight, is an instrument
 Of Nature's common work. Yes—think of me,
 My EDITH! think—that travelling far away
 I do beguile the long and lonely hours
 With many a day-dream, picturing scenes as fair,
 Of peace, and comfort, and domestic joys,
 As ever to the youthful poet's eye
 Creative Fancy fashion'd. Think of me,
 My EDITH! absent from thee, in a land
 Of strangers! and remember when thy heart
 Heaves with the sigh of sorrow, what delight
 Awaits the moment when the eager voice
 Of welcome, shall that sorrow overpay.

Being a Bristol-man, and of course not the
 worse for a little smoking, I have ventured into
 the kitchen to warm myself among the mule-
 teers and Maragatos, and prepare our supper.
 By the bye the barber's wife sold us the old
 cock by way of a delicate chicken. We have
 found that the people will over-reach us if they

can, and it is not to be wondered at. He who starves his dog makes a thief of him. Poverty is the mother of crimes. Yet we have experienced much attention and hospitality: my Uncle gave a few reales among the Carpenter's children, who was making our new axle-tree; and when we departed this morning, their mother brought us a pig's face, and a lap full of pears.

*LETTER VII.*BANEZA, *Saturday, Dec. 26.*

We have passed over a bleak and desolate track of barrenness this morning, near the Cavern of Gil Blas. Never was there a more convenient place to be murdered in, and eleven monumental crosses, which I counted within three leagues, justified my opinion of its physiognomy. Here they were evidently erected, where travellers had been murdered by banditti, but it is probable that most of these monuments are for people who have fallen in private quarrels. I infer this from observing them more frequent in villages than lonely places, and from the furious passions of the Southern Europeans. The dispute that would provoke a blow from an Englishman would instigate an Italian or a Spaniard to murder.

A ridge of mountains in the Asturias lay to our left, a dreary ridge spotted with snow. When we began to descend we saw the walls and cathedral towers of Astorga in the plain below, and the plains of Castille spreading beyond like the ocean seen from an eminence.

We stopped two hours at Astorga, once the capital of the Asturias, but Oviedo holds that rank at present, and this is now a city of Leon. Here I expected to live well. Gil Blas had fared luxuriously at Astorga; we heard of a cook's shop; Manuel was appointed commissioner to examine the state of provisions, and his report was, that we might have half a turkey and a leg of mutton just dressed, for a dollar. If the Queen's birth-day may be put off six months, why might not we keep Christmas-day on the twenty-sixth of December, and dine orthodoxly on Turkey? When these dainties arrived—for the poor bird, Vitellius would have

“ Made the wicked master cook

“ In boiling oil to stand ;”



and for the mutton, I vehemently suspect it to have been the leg of some little ugly bandy-legged tough-sinewed turnspit.

The streets of Astorga are paved in ridges; the castle and the cathedral are well worthy the traveller's observation, the one for its antiquity, the other for its beauty. Over the castle gateway are the figures of a warrior and lion fighting, and escutcheons, supported each by a man and woman in the dress of the times: these should be preserved by the hand of the engraver before they share the same fate as the rest of the building.

The sight of a ruined castle in England, though calling up some melancholy reflections, still reminds us of the improvements of society. God be thanked that the pride of chivalry is extinguished for ever! it is sad to behold

The desert ivy clasp the joyless hearth;

but it is pleasant to remember that the Feudal Tyranny is mellowed down, and that though

England incurs all the guilt of war, she feels very few of its horrors. In Spain society is not improved, the halls of Hospitality are desolate, but the haunts of Superstition are multiplying. They are building a new convent by the ruins of the Castle of Astorga.

I saw families actually living in holes dug in the Castle wall. *Almost* I regret the Moors: for what has this country gained by their expulsion? A tolerant and cleanly superstition has been exchanged for the filth and ferocity of Monks, and the dogma of Mary's immaculate conception has taken place of the divine legation of Mahommed. To say that the Courts of Cordova and Granada exhibited more splendor than that of Madrid, were only to shew them superior in what is of little worth; but when were the arts so fostered? when were the people so industrious and so happy?

There is a curious Roman piece of bas-relievo in the Cloisters lately dug up. Our posada has glass windows, the first that we have seen,

and we procured an excellent wine called Peralta, in flavor not unlike mountain, but superior. This is the only place where we have been able to obtain any thing better than the common country wine since we left Coruña, except at Lugo, where we found some Malaga.

The view of Astorga, as we left it, was singular. It has no suburbs, the walls though somewhat ruinous, still surround it, and just without the gate is the *alameda*, or grove of poplar trees, usually planted as a public walk near the towns in this country.

We proceeded four leagues over a plain to Baneza. Here is the best house we have yet found. They have got us a rabbit, and five partridges. On entering this town, as likewise at Astorga, a man came to examine our baggage; a mode of taking a pesetta without the disgrace of begging, or the danger of robbing.

Sunday, December 27.

Beneza is an old and ugly town with piazzas under its houses. A cross was suspended from the front of the posada there, like an English sign, and near it a sun in the same manner, underwritten the house of the sun. They brought us a bill here, and it was very extravagant. Six reales for the rabbits and onions, twenty four for the partridges, two for the candles, and the rest in the same proportion. In Spain however no traveller can be imposed upon, if he chooses to prevent it, by calling for a board with the just price of every article, which, by order of the Government, is kept in every posada. Our road was very bad; it lay over a fertile and populous plain for three leagues, till we reached the Puente de Bisana. On either side of us lay towns thickly scattered, all of which had once been fortified. Lapwings, storks, and wild ducks, are in abundance here: he who travels with a gun in this part of the country, never need want provisions. At the bridge of Bisana is a posada miserably furnished with two beds and one solitary chair! Here I

saw a man whose breeches were of white sheep skin, and his gaiters of black with the wool outwards. From hence to Benevente are three leagues and a half of good road, a thing of no small consequence here, for you cannot calculate your time by the length of the way, without taking the state of the road into consideration. To the right of the Puente de Bisana, we saw a range of caverns dug out of a hill: I fancied them to be the dens of the persecuted natives, Suevi or Goths, and my imagination peopled them with banditti: on enquiry we learnt they were wine vaults. The cellars near Benevente are hollowed in the earth, and the earth from the cavity forms a mound above them, in which the entrance appears like the chimney of a subterraneous dwelling. We passed through a village completely in ruins, the houses and churches were of mud, the walls only remained, and there was not a single inhabitant.

We arrived at Benevente too late to see the inside of the Castle. M. however had formerly

visited it, and I copy his account. "We entered by a gradual ascent which led to a cloister or colonnade of four sides, that looked down into a court where once had been a fountain. We were hence conducted through a Moorish gateway of three simicircular arches, to a large room decorated with bearings, &c. This opened into a gallery of about fifty paces long and twelve wide, ornamented in the most elegant Moorish taste. The front is supported by jasper pillars; the pavement consists of tiles coloured and painted with the escalop or scollop shell of St. Iago. In the recesses of the wall are Arabic decorations and inscriptions. From hence is an extensive prospect over the fertile vallies of Leon, watered by the Marez and the Ezla. From the wall of the stair-case an arm in armour supports a lamp. The roof of the chapel represents Stalactydes. In the armory are old muskets, where the trigger brought the match round to the pan." The castle belongs to the Duke of Ossuna. Benevente must be a place of considerable trade, for when M. was last here he counted above fifty carts in the market place, chiefly laden with grain.