

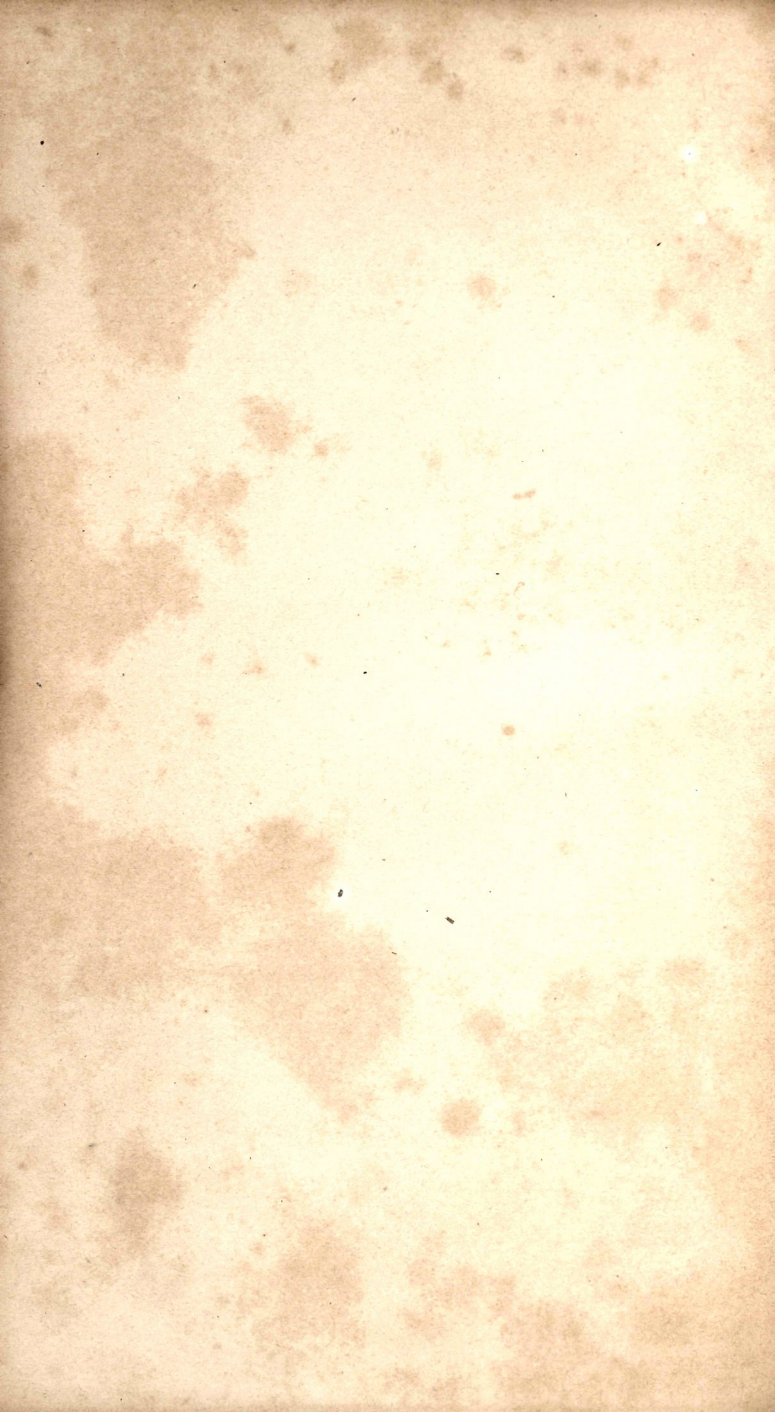


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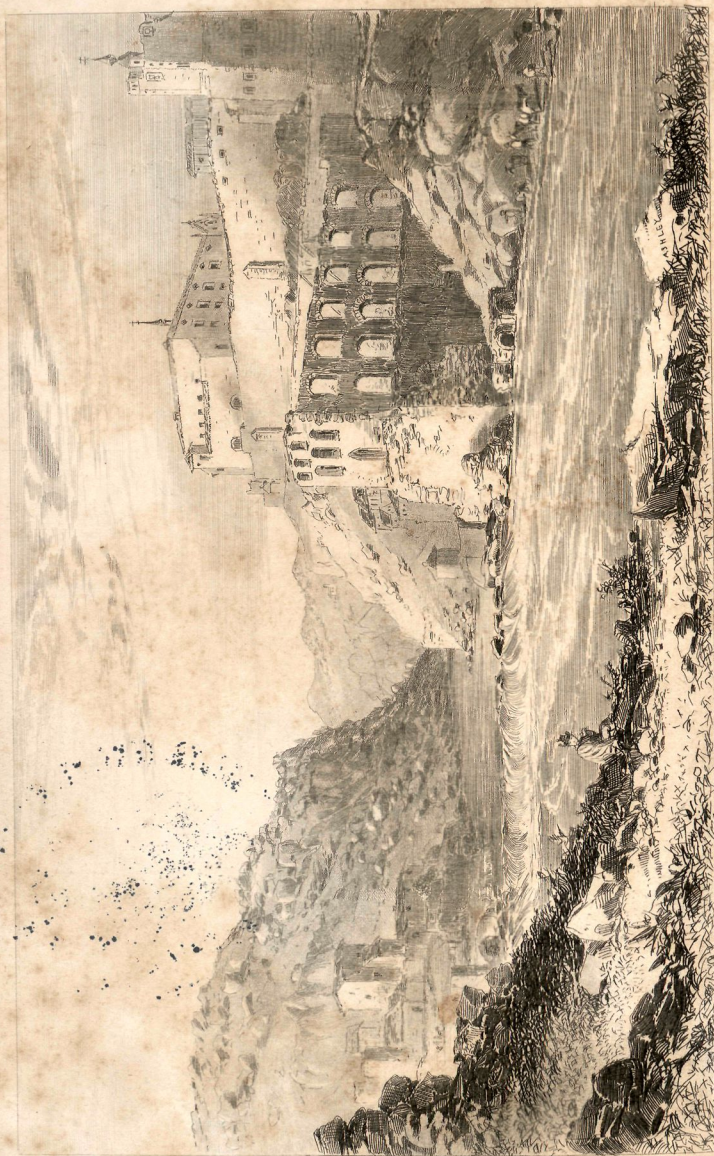
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G. A. Hoskins. Esq. del.

The Town of Toledo

SPAIN, AS IT IS.

BY

G. A. HOSKINS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

“TRAVELS IN ETHIOPIA, AND VISIT TO THE GREAT OASIS,”
ETC. ETC.



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SPAIN

AS IT IS.

CHAPTER I.

ROUTE TO SPAIN—PARIS—LYONS—AVIGNON—MONTPELLIER—
PERPIGNAN—PASSPORTS—GERONA—CATHEDRAL—INDUSTRY
OF THE CATALONIANS.

A JOURNEY to Madrid and through Andalusia, is now frequently taken by Englishmen; but Spain is little visited by English ladies and families, notwithstanding the acknowledged attractions of the tour, beautiful scenery, interesting works of art, and historical associations. It is difficult to reach the Peninsula, for no one who has ever experienced the storms of the Bay of Biscay wishes to encounter them again. The dangers are not so great as in the time of the Armada, but still a voyage to Cadiz, or even to Vigo, if not in these days a perilous undertaking, is, to those who are bad sailors, certainly a disagreeable one. The Bay of Biscay is magnificent in a

storm. I shall never forget what a splendid sight it was after a violent tempest, to see the waves dashing over the rocks of the French coast ; but few are sufficiently well to enjoy such views, or anything else, at sea.

To cross France, is always considered a fatigue, mental and physical, so little to see, so much to endure ; but now, thanks to steam, the journey is shorter and infinitely less fatiguing. In one day we can go from Calais or Boulogne to Paris, in another day Lyons is reached, taking the railway to Châlons and the steam-boat on the Seine from there to Lyons. On the third day, starting at five, the traveller may go by diligence or the Rhone, to Avignon and Montpellier. The eleven o'clock steam-boat divides the journey, and in the winter, when the mornings are misty, it is a more prudent plan, as in endeavouring to go through in one day, they often fail, and are obliged to anchor in the river, or at some village where there is no inn. We had a short day's sail to Valence, and the next day arrived in time to see Avignon, and proceed by railway to Nismes, and examine the antiquities there. Travelling by the diligence a night and a day from Nismes to Perpignan, the journey across France may be finished on the fourth or fifth day.

To save fatigue and travelling by night, which is desirable when with ladies, even at the loss of a day, the railway may be taken from Montpellier to

Cette, from which place a steam-boat sails every morning at half-past seven across the lake of Thaw to the great Canal du Midi where you join the packet-boat, which arrives at Beziers at one, and an indifferent diligence starting from there at two, is three hours in going to Narbonne. The diligence to Perpignan passes Narbonne at half-past eight in the morning, and arrives at Perpignan at four in the afternoon. The journey across France may thus be made comfortably in less than a week, and except from Beziers to Perpignan, the whole journey is accomplished by railway and steam-boat, and therefore without fatigue, even to the most delicate.

Those who have only time for a short tour in Spain, may arrive in three or four days at Marseilles, and there (if there is no quarantine) take the steamers which coast along the shores of the Mediterranean, and visit the principal towns. Delightful glimpses may thus be enjoyed of that interesting country, and certainly great fatigue and inconveniences avoided. Those, however, who have time and strength, should go by land, as little is to be seen of the agricultural districts sailing along the coast, and still less of the country peasants, the most interesting class of Spaniards.

The facilities for crossing this part of France are certainly very great, but the French regulations are bad. There is still the same difficulty about the passport at Calais; besides paying five shillings for

one at Dover, they insist on your having a passport *provisoire* at Calais, which is given to you with your own, and can be of no earthly use except to the Jack-in-office, who requires, in no civil terms, a fee of two francs for granting it, and, what is worse, your attendance at the Hôtel-de-Ville in Calais, at the risk of being too late for the train. The system of arranging all the luggage at the railway stations, before they deliver it, may be safer, but any one would prefer the risk we run in England, rather than wait an hour at the end of a long journey as we did at Paris amongst a crowd of all kinds of people, and not a seat to sit down upon.

The railway being now open from Paris to Châlons, will save much fatigue. We had to take places in a diligence to Lyons, and so we drove first from the Hôtel Meurice to the Messageries Royales, and there we lost a great deal of time packing the luggage on the diligence; then after a considerable delay, we had to drive to the railway station, and there encountered other delays; so that from the time we left the hotel, more than two hours were consumed before the immense diligence, weighing ten thousand pounds, was hoisted off its wheels upon a truck, on the railway carriage, and we started upon our journey. We were obliged to remain twenty-four hours cramped up in a very small *coupé*, when it would have been quite as easy to have provided carriages as well as wheels from

Tonnerre to Dijon. The French are full of theoretical notions of liberty, but custom-house nuisances still exist. Our boxes were examined at Calais, again at Paris, at least one was opened for form's sake, and at Lyons they were carried to a custom-house, and would have been examined again if I had not told them we were going on to Avignon, and they had not been convinced we were foreigners. When we entered the towns, we were always asked if we had anything *à déclarer*. The system of octroi duties on articles entering from the country into the towns seems to exist in all its glory.

There is, however, much to interest the traveller on this route through France, and many temptations to linger. Few would pass through Paris without staying a day or two to revisit the Louvre, boulevards and promenades; and after so many revolutions it was gratifying to see the metropolis so gay, and to judge from the shop-windows, richer than ever. Never have I seen the shops there more brilliant, or the streets more crowded. The Faubourg St. Germain, which was but lately a desert, has been this winter more brilliant than ever; commerce has revived, but alas! no one has any confidence in the future!

The banks of the Saone are pleasant and sometimes pretty. Dijon, with its Gothic churches, fine museum, containing some good paintings and most interesting tombs, and a beautiful promenade,

is worth the delay of an hour or two. Lyons also is a handsome town, and the views from the Terrace de Fourvières are very fine. The Rhone is a noble, and in many parts a beautiful river; the castles and towns, and vine-clad hills, almost as picturesque as the Rhine. Avignon is an interesting place, the palace and the beautiful crucifixion at the Hôpital des Fous should be visited, and the panoramic view from the promenade is magnificent. Most persons would like to linger there, some to visit Marseilles, one of the finest towns in France; others to make a pilgrimage to Vaucluse, and with Petrarch in their hands, ramble along the wild river, and the still wilder rocks, immortalized in the verses of the most elegant of the Italian poets.

The splendid amphitheatre and the beautiful Maison Quarrée at Nismes are soon seen, but the antiquarian would wish to see them again and again. Montpellier is also a pleasant place, and the promenade delightful.

Perpignan was a Spanish town until the treaty of the Pyrenees united it with France in 1695; the public buildings, arcades, and streets, are anything but French, and the people are evidently of Spanish origin. At Perpignan we had our passport signed for Barcelona by the Spanish Consul, which was done for five francs, and without any delay. Travellers should always endeavour to get their passports signed for as distant a place as

they can. There is little trouble given to Englishmen in Spain, but travellers may create a great deal for themselves if they do not give their passports to the valets at the inns to get signed for them whenever requisite. It is best to consider passports as a tax on the pocket and not on the time, and take no trouble about them, which can be avoided by paying the persons whose particular duty it is to get them arranged.

On the 4th of March, we left Perpignan at three in the morning, in a very decent diligence. The fares are moderate, but they charge high for luggage, thirty pounds only being allowed to each person. We arrived at Baulon, a wretched village, at half-past five, and soon after crossed the Col de Pertus. The road winds up rocky valleys full of strips of verdure and magnificent cork-trees. The fortress of Bellegarde is picturesquely situated on one of the hills, but the great feature of this pass is the magnificent mountain of Carigon, which soars like Mont Blanc above the other mountains that are near it, and is not unlike the giant of the Alps in form, and in its eternal covering of snow. We passed several masses of rubble walls, remains of very ancient forts, and after driving through the poor village of Pertus, descended into Spain, when the views became less interesting. In a quarter of an hour we arrived at the Spanish barrier, where our luggage was examined, a delay of an hour

bribes even could not protect us from. We foraged for breakfast, and after many inquiries, succeeded in procuring a cup of chocolate and some excellent bread.

We left the frontier at nine, and at one arrived at Figueras, a clean-looking, straggling town, celebrated for its fortress of San Fernando, which we had not time to visit, being obliged to superintend a second, but less rigid, examination of our luggage. We had then our first specimen of a Spanish dinner.—The soup was truly execrable, and Messieurs B. and L., two French gentlemen, leaving France for the first time, were greatly horrified, and seemed to regret not a little the flesh-pots of Toulouse. We had, however, an abundance of dishes, and though garlic, strong oil, and saffron made many unpalatable, there was boiled beef and boiled fowls, and roasted fowls to please the fastidious, and we all made tolerable dinners. We started again at half-past one, and arrived at Gerona at five; the country woody, and covered with cork-trees and olives.

All the fields are carefully cultivated, and a great deal is done by spade labour. The activity and industry of the Catalonians is very striking, even to the traveller leaving France. Everybody seemed to be busy in the little villages we passed; even the women were all engaged in some useful employment — knitting and sewing, but chiefly

making lace. The climate is fine, and the soil, often rich, is everywhere made the most of; and wages are high—*1s. 3d.* to *1s. 6d.* a-day; though provisions are cheap—meat only *3d.* a-pound.

Gerona is celebrated for its gallant, but unfortunate defences attempted against overwhelming forces. Charlemagne took it first in 785, and the Moors sacked it in 795. In the War of the Succession, with a garrison of only two thousand, they attempted to resist nineteen thousand men, under Philip V.

In 1809, Gerona was besieged by a French force of thirty-five thousand men; and such was the gallant resistance of the Catalonians, women even assisting, that fifteen thousand Frenchmen are said to have perished before famine compelled the brave commander, Alvarez, to surrender.

Gerona is also celebrated for the heroic defence of the tower of the Cathedral, by Doña Juana Henriquez, the Queen of Juan II., a woman justly celebrated for her extraordinary talent and courage, and her ambition and affection for her own son, Ferdinand, which are supposed to have induced her to cause poison to be administered to her stepson, Charles, the idol of the Catalonians. At her instigation, he was thrown into prison; and when the entire nation rose in arms, and his father was compelled to restore him to liberty, he carried with him from the dungeons of Morella the

germs of a disease, for which no antidote could be found.

The verdict of a whole nation pronounced Juana a murderess; and if a body of six thousand French had not come here to her assistance, the enraged Catalonians would have revenged on the Royal Lioness, as she was called, and her son, who was with her, her step-son's undoubted wrongs, and his supposed murder.*

Gerona is a well-built town, most of the houses appearing to be of stone; the streets are narrow, almost as much so as in Oriental towns. The cathedral is on a hill, and at a distance is very conspicuous. A handsome flight of eighty-six steps leads to the front, which is unfinished, except a portion of it, which is in the Italian style, with the addition of a wheel window. It has the appearance of being a pretty *façade* of a small church tacked on to an unfinished larger church, with which, however, it does not harmonize in the least.

What is really worth observing in this cathedral is the interior, which consists of a single nave, with a semi-circular absis. We saw it too late in the day to judge of the detail, but the evening gloom enhanced the fine effect of the broad single nave, the fine arches, and the rich stained glass of the windows. There are some terra-cotta figures

* Calcott's Spain.