

kings, from Ferdinand the Catholic, down to the last of the Bourbons, which our Catalan praised as very just, and which certainly was not one of eulogy.

In the meanwhile, he observed, France herself appeared to be in a disturbed state, and possibly we should find more of revolution there than we had found in Spain.

We had now reached GERONA. This old city is very picturesque, standing on the banks of the river Oña, with steep hills as a back ground.

FONDA DE ESPANA.—A good *fonda*, and possessing beautiful Ajimez windows.

THE CATHEDRAL.—This magnificent Church was founded by Charlemagne, but the earliest portion now seen dates from the twelfth century. It is reached by the usual flight of steps: we entered by the western door, and found ourselves in a grand nave, described by Mr. Street* as “the widest pointed vault in Christendom.” Before the present nave was added in 1416, the Bishop called a council of architects to decide whether to follow out the original design of spanning the whole of the vast space with one vault, or to divide it into three.

The plan of the single vault was adopted, as “more brilliant, better proportioned, and less costly” than the other—the architect himself declaring that his plan possessed “such advantages, and such grand lights, that it would be a most beautiful and notable work.”

So it has proved: nothing can be grander than the effect produced. The width of this nave is seventy-five feet; that of Westminster Abbey being only thirty-eight.

The retablo is of silver, and of much earlier date. It is surmounted by a curious canopy, likewise wrought in silver; in the centre is the figure of the Virgin; and on each side are St. Narcissus, the Martyr-Bishop of Gerona in the fourth century, and St. Felix, his deacon. Over the door of the Sacristia is a striking monument of a recumbent knight in armour; near which are the silver chimes, which have such a novel effect to English ears when introduced into the service.

* See “Gothic” Architecture in Spain.

Like most Spanish cloisters, those of Gerona are exceedingly picturesque, and full of quaint decoration. Outside these Cloisters is a steep path from which you have a grand view of the city.

THE CHURCH OF SAN FELIU.—At first sight this building might pass for a fortress, so little does it resemble a Christian Church. Its walls are massive and loopholed, and on more than one occasion SAN FELIU has stood a siege. The name of the mother of Ferdinand the Catholic, is connected with this Church. In the fifteenth century the Catalans revolted against their King—John II. of Aragon—whom they accused of the murder of his eldest son, Don Carlos, Prince of Viana. The Prince was heir to the throne, and deservedly popular with the nation. His imprisonment, followed by his sudden death, gave rise to suspicion, and the people flew to arms. Queen Joan was second wife to John II., and the supposed instigator of the murder. She was at Gerona when the insurrection broke out: the city was immediately besieged, and taken by the Catalans. Joan threw herself with her followers into SAN FELIU, and within this impregnable Church she kept her assailants at bay, till reinforcements from the King came to her rescue. Carlos was elder brother to Ferdinand, but the affections of the old King were centred in the son of his old age, rather than in the heir to the throne.

A marriage had been proposed between Carlos and Isabella of Castile, with a view of uniting the crowns of Castile and Aragon; but Queen Joan had already selected Isabella to be the bride of the young Ferdinand, and to make the marriage with her stepson impossible, she induced the King to imprison him. Unsuspicious of treachery, and confiding in his father's promises, Carlos repaired to the court of the King. After a short interview, he left the royal presence, and found himself under arrest.

The news of his imprisonment so excited the brave Catalans, that they took up arms, and not only procured the release of their Prince, but forced the King to acknowledge him publicly as the heir to the throne.

The misfortunes which had so long clouded the life of

the Prince of Viana now seemed to have passed away; but the hatred of the King and Queen, though concealed, was only increased by the popular demonstration in his favor. Secret and surer measures were devised by which they could attain their end. Poison, it is said, was administered to Carlos, and his death in the autumn of 1461 cleared the way to the throne for Ferdinand.

Queen Joan lost no time in commencing negotiations for the marriage of her son with Isabella of Castile, but the Queen did not live to see the fulfilment of her long cherished designs.

She died of a lingering disease, a few months before the marriage took place.

Her last hours were embittered by remorse, and on her death bed she is said to have exclaimed—"Alas! Ferdinand, how dear thou hast cost thy mother!"*

Thus perfidy would seem to cling to the history of Ferdinand from his very cradle. Even his marriage with Isabella was shadowed by an act of deceit. A dispensation from Rome was necessary before it could be solemnised, as they were within the degrees of relationship prohibited by the Church. The assent of the Pope was doubtful; time was precious; and a forged document was produced by Ferdinand which quieted the religious scruples of Isabella. It was not till years afterwards that she discovered the fraud, when she immediately applied for the requisite dispensation.

Again, when Isabella was dying, Ferdinand took an oath that he would not, by a second marriage, deprive their children of any part of their inheritance.

On this assurance, Isabella left him the Regency of Castile, and the greater part of the wealth of the New World.† Sixteen months afterwards he married the beautiful Germaine de Foix, niece of Louis XII., and false to his oath, signed a marriage contract which, had the child of Germaine lived, would have robbed Charles V. of Naples and Aragon.

The taint of perfidy seems to mark, in a greater or less degree, the character of Ferdinand's descendants.

* See "Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella."

† Coxe's "Annals of the House of Austria."

The prayers publicly offered up by Charles V. for the safety* of the Pope, the Holy Father being at the time his prisoner; the sinister smile of Philip II., quickly followed by his dagger; the imperturbable calm with which Philip IV. covered his falsehoods—are all evidences of that moral deformity which may be traced back to Ferdinand the Catholic, of whom it was observed by a contemporary, that “his countenance never betrayed his thoughts.”

The diligence was at the door of the FONDA DE ESPAÑA, and GERONA and the steeple of SAN FELIU were soon in the distance. In three hours and a half we were at FIGUERAS, where Maria Louisa, of Savoy, the youthful bride of Philip V., was forced, in spite of her tears, to dismiss all her Italian suite, and remain alone with the Spanish ladies appointed by Louis XIV. The young queen soon learnt to rule her husband as completely as she herself was ruled by the Princess Orsini, but she was powerless to check the occasional fits of gloom to which Philip, like his ancestors, was subject, and which caused him at times to shut himself up for whole days in a darkened room.

The tree of Liberty stood in the market place, as we drove through Figueras and the voices of children were heard singing the new National Hymn. This is all we perceived of revolutionary feeling in Spain.

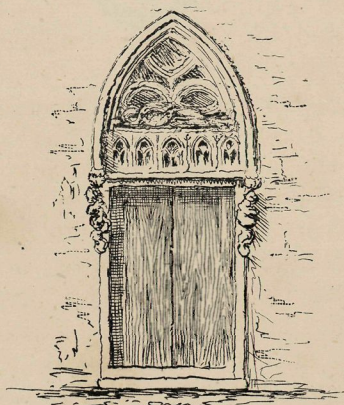
In the fields were women, distaff in hand, tending their sheep or swine: there was an air of activity all around, verifying the statement of our fellow traveller as to the industry of the Catalans.

Shut up in our coupé, we trotted along at a brisk pace. It was an ordinary French diligence, jingling, rattling, creaking, as it rolled on its way to La Junquera, the last Spanish town. As we reached it, we heard the watchman calling the hour of the night, “Once y cuarto.” At midnight we were at the frontier. Neither moon nor stars appeared; no light but the lamp of the diligence shining full on the horses, and casting dark shadows along the steep descent. Below, toiling up the

* Brantone says that Charles was nicknamed in France “Charles qui triche.”

hill, were market carts, each with its lantern glowing in the dark distance. Day dawned as we entered the Moorish gate of PERPIGNAN, after an eleven hours journey: a thick mist hung over Imperial France, and we had seen the last of Spanish towns and Spanish pictures.

The Photo-lithographs in this volume are by Mr. STEPHEN AYLING, 6, Augustus Square, N.W., from pencil and pen and ink drawings.





St. Clement's Lane

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