

XIV.

JÁTIVA AND VALENCIA.

“CLIMATE most delicious”; “Sierras and valleys which abound in beautiful scenery”; “Truly a favoured land”; “Ever increasing delight in enchanting walks”; “The drive from Alicante to Elche is most beautiful.” Such is the chorus arising from the guide-books anent Murcia, Elche and Alicante, and surely it is a most wonderful instance of the indiscriminate colouring splashed about by travellers, and travellers’ Mentors. Let us try to believe it all—at a distance. The process of verification would be such a cruel one that we will not now attempt it;—not even when we can be carried swiftly by steam wings over the wastes lying between Murcia and Játiva, and so preserved from the never-to-be-forgotten horrors of the old diligence route. It might be said of all this district as Gautier wrote, somewhat carelessly, of Felipe Segundo’s convent-palace, that whatever other ills have to be faced in life there is always the consolation of thinking that one might be at El Escorial, and is not.

Let us prefer, then, to journey direct to Valencia, by way of picturesque old Jaen, with its splendid gorge, and

sentinel-like Pandera and Jabalcuz, concerning which they say irreverently,—

“ Cuando Jabalcuz tiene capuz,
Y la Pandera montera,
Lloverá aunque Dios no quiera.”

But a halt must be made for one night at Játiva, which is not only pretty in itself but profoundly interesting in its associations. It was the home of the great Borja—or Borgia—family, so distinguished alike by infamous and by noble records, a family to which belonged the unique honour of producing three archbishops, two popes and a saint within a century.

San Francisco de Borja was born at the family seat of Gandia, lying some twelve miles away, upon the coast; and here the great-grandson of Ferdinand the Catholic, a man of splendid gifts, and surrounded by every temptation which fortune, position and example could bring into the field, spent the greater part of his self-denying life, in works of purest and humblest piety. How his ascetic tendencies—his distrusting of all things temporal—were fixed by the appalling sight of the change which death had wrought in the features of his great mistress, the empress Isabella, is an oft-told tale, and one which we may have recalled to mind when standing at the foot of the marble cross behind the Hospicio Real in Granada, which marks the spot where the incident took place. But an undue *éclat* is often given to the scene, as being a sudden conversion of

the saint from vicious courses, and, moreover, as being the result of an idle curiosity on his part. Borja had not at any time been the careless man of the world that his great leader Loyola was; and the uncovering of the corpse in his presence was a simple and necessary act, before proving to the magistrates of Granada that it was indeed the body of the empress which he delivered to them, and which he had been commissioned by Carlos Quinto to bear from Toledo.

Játiva has had other famous sons than the Borjas, in one of whom, Ribera the painter, we have already been more or less interested. It is a place, too, full of all ancient record—record of every race that in historic times has invaded or dwelt in the land, from the Phœnicians downwards. And, finally, there may be seen here, and seen under much pleasanter auspices, those special forms of Nature, and Nature's cultivation, for which the unwary traveller is so often relegated to Murcia. There are groves of date-palms, orange, pomegranate and mulberry trees, as fine as those of the region lying to the south, and far more beautiful to look at because free from the taint and blighting of a poor type of Eastern life. Huge *garrofa* trees there are too, and fields of melons, hemp and flax, with, of course, the unfailling rice plantations. It is a district intersected by canals and *acequias*, owing its very existence as a prosperous country to that wonderful system of irrigation organised and handed down by the Moors, whereby, in a land apparently without water, every

one receives his due supply—and that however fierce or prolonged the summer heat may be—while no one is inundated. It is quite impossible to picture the green loveliness of the scene between Játiva and Manuel, where the road seems literally to push its way for miles through the boughs of the most gloriously hued orange trees, and where the pretty, whitewashed houses are overshadowed by groups of stately palms. One usually thinks of these last as fringing the desert, and struggling hard in their beauty against weary, dust-coloured surroundings—as, for example, at Elche. They are infinitely more lovely here, where they have an even deeper blue for background, where there is no glare, or dirt, or weariness, to blur them, and where there is a carpeting of richly contrasting colours. The female tree alone bears fruit, and these, from November to February—when the dates are gathered—are the most beautiful. The males bear a white flower in May and June, and during the rest of the year are liable to be shorn of all prettiness by being tied up in order to blanch the leaves against Palm Sunday. The Easter ‘Blessing of the palms,’ in commemoration of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, is an imposing ceremonial in the Roman Church, and has a special form of service provided for it. The branches, after being carried into church, and held in the hands of the congregation during the mass, are taken home and fondly preserved during the year as a species of talisman. The Anglican Church eliminated the service in the drastic period of

Edward the Sixth's reign, and since then Palm Sunday has, like many other pretty commemorations, passed almost out of our knowledge.

Valencia del Cid—El Campeador! How changed she is since the days when she was his capital and court! How unweariedly has she striven to rid herself of the very traditions which she claims! The Cid's very palace, the Torre Bab-el-Schadchar, has been destroyed. And with it has gone; too, the adjoining gate of the same name—but more commonly known as the Puerta del Cid—through which he entered in triumph in 1094, when he had wrested the city from the Moors; through which again, five years later, his own ghastly funeral *cortège* passed away, amidst the awe-stricken ranks of the besiegers, to the far-off San Pedro de Cardeña. True, there is a record of these places—a shield, a cross and an inscription upon a great blank church wall in the Plaza de Trinitarios—but no shadow of reference is made therein to the Cid:—

“*Sitio de la torre y puerta Bab-el-Schadchar*
Llamada despues Del Temple
Donde tremoló el pendon Real en la conquista
El 9 de Octubre de 1238
Concedida por el invicto Rey D. Jaime I.
á los Templarios
Conservada por el órden militar de Montesa
Y demolida para ensanche de la Ciudad en 1865.”

This commemorates only the re-taking of the city, by Don Jaime El Conquistador. After that memorable

passage of the Cid to Cardena the great-hearted Jimena managed to hold his capital for two years; but then the Moors re-entered (in 1101), to retain possession for a short twenty-seven years, and to be finally thrust away by the general tide of re-conquest.

It is perhaps as well that one's sentimental notions concerning the old hero receive a little shock when his haunts are sought out. For all the record of the later years of Don Rodrigo Ruy Diaz, with his lording it over Valencia, and indeed his very title, go to prove that he was by no means so "true to his God and his country" as his chroniclers have tried to make us believe, but that he was pretty much an ambitious free lance in his own service. El Campeador, the Champion, means nothing—or, at any rate, nothing more than all other similar and arrogant titles—but El Cid, or *Sid*, means a good deal. It is an Arabic word signifying 'lord,' and was conferred upon Don Rodrigo by the Moors of Zaragoza when he was fighting for them against the Christians. There was some excuse for his desertion of the Cross, no doubt, for his patron Sancho had been killed by Alonso the Sixth, and when, as we reminded ourselves in Burgos, Don Roderick made the murderer swear in Santa Agueda that he had had no participation in the crime, he had to flee hard from the royal vengeance. Still there is a strange significance in the fact that it is only as the Moslem *Sid* that the boasted Christian champion has come down to us.

As in these, so in all other directions, Valencia has

made haste, like Valladolid, to adapt herself to quickly succeeding times and fashions, and has swept away an untold amount of precious relics. Her old churches and palaces, her *tapia* walls and massive gates, with most of her ancient monuments, are gone, and such things as are left have a grievously 'got-up' appearance about them. We may speak quite confidently about the 'massive' gateways, for two of them are still to be seen, and are very magnificent specimens of solid and artful work. They are both of the same description, the double archway being recessed between two noble polygonal towers, which are taken up to a remarkable height and carry a huge, corbelled-out platform. Over the entrance archway runs a line of slender arcading, with very delicate head tracery, which gives just a fine relief to the whole structure without in any degree interfering with its chiefest attribute of solidity.

There are a few other very satisfactory bits, too, in the old city,—the wonderfully beautiful late Gothic Lonja, the octagonal 'Miguelete' belfry-tower, some portions of the cathedral, with, every here and there, good specimens of fifteenth and sixteenth century domestic architecture. And there is hardly a trace of the dreariness which hangs about most of the modernised Spanish cities. There is a vast amount of bright life and gorgeous colouring in the streets and market-places, with a quite Catalan forcefulness of character. The Valenciano is, moreover, a very excitable individual, eager for any scrimmage or spectacle which may end in

a little blood-letting, and so he imports a special charm of fervour into all his feasts and sports. There may be seen upon these occasions, and in perfection, the varied costumes of the lower orders—especially that of the Huerta man, or peasant from the Garden. With his brilliantly coloured *manta* thrown loosely over a white linen nether man and black velveteen jacket, and with a bright kerchief knotted round his head, he is perhaps the best dressed individual in the whole Peninsula,—and looks as if he thought so, into the bargain.

Valencia is the third best point for studying the Spanish schools of painting, and though it is perhaps a piece of over-refinement to carve out a separate Valencian section, there are yet some men—say Juan de Juanes, Ribalta, Espinosa and Orrente—who have here found distinct and characteristic ways of expression, and whose works are only fairly represented in their own Museo and churches. Ribera, the fifth greatest Valencian painter, one can see abundantly elsewhere. Of the productions of Juan Juanes the Madrid gallery has a fair number—eighteen or nineteen; but, with the exception, perhaps, of the fine *Visitacion*, none of them are comparable with the *Last Supper* and the *Descent from the Cross* in San Nicolas, the splendid purple-robed Christ in the cathedral, the Holy Family in the cathedral sacristy, or the *Ecce Homo* and *Purissima* of the Museo. There is a correctness of handling and power of conception (almost amounting to inspira-

tion*) in these pictures with which one would never have credited the somewhat weak-kneed Juanes to be met with out of Valencia. In the San Nicolas *Cenacolo*, the most famous, perhaps, of all Juanes' works, the two central figures are somewhat disappointing. The Christ is too human, and Saint John is overwrought in sentiment. It would be difficult, however, to find any but the most trifling fault with the neighbouring *Descendimiento*. The depicting here of an indubitable human death upon the cross, of not only mental but *bodily* abandonment to anguish on the part of the Virgin—Our Lady of Sorrows—and the expression of sympathetic helpfulness in the countenances and attitudes of the attendants, would alone entitle Juanes to the highest consideration.

Espinosa and Orrente are seen to the greatest advantage in the Museo, the latter being chiefly notable as one of the very few Spanish painters who have cared to pourtray animal life with any degree of study or appreciation. Espinosa seems to have been a most uncertain painter, unless many of the works attributed to him are by an inferior hand—perhaps his son, Juan de Espinosa. His Santa Magdalena in the Museo is as vigorous in conception and drawing, and as broad and rich in

* Inspiration which one is tempted to put down to the religious preparation wherewith we know that Juanes was accustomed to approach his work. He carried out literally the old injunction that "when an ymage maker shall kerve, caste in molde or peynte ony ymage, he shal go to a prieste and shryve him as clene as if he sholde then dye."

colouring, as most of the other works shown as his are deficient in every artistic attribute. There are some dozen really praiseworthy paintings by him scattered over Valencia, but this *Magdalena*, and the *Cristo á la Columna* of the Madrid gallery, are probably his masterpieces.

Then there is Francisco Ribalta—the father of Juan de Ribalta—who is comparatively unrepresented elsewhere, but who here, and with all his surroundings, claims a special notice. He has two or three very excellent things in the Museo, especially a *Concepcion* and a rather dark *San Bruno*, but his finest paintings are to be found in the Patriarca church. Here there is a whole series, the best being the *Last Supper* over the high altar, a *Holy Family*, and *San Vicente visited on his deathbed by Christ and attendant saints*. Unfortunately one can only understand that these are noble works in every way—in conception, grouping and colouring—for the light is vexatiously bad, even for Spanish carelessness in such matters. Though, from his Italian training, Ribalta was in some sort an imitator of the Bolognese school, he was, withal, thoroughly—that is to say essentially—original, and may be ranked, upon the whole, as the greatest of the Valencian painters. He died in 1628, when Murillo was just beginning to make his first essays, and young Velazquez had already won a name and fine position at Madrid.

This Patriarca church—more properly the Colegio de Corpus—is to be carefully looked at for its own sake.

If, as they say, it was Herrera's, it was a most marvelous effort on the part of that apostle of clumsiness. It is one of the finest examples of severe Corinthian to be met with, and is useful, moreover, in dispossessing one's mind of the notion that the Good only makes its home in some particular and pet style. The church consists of a single nave, with slightly recessed chapels under round arches, shallow transepts, and a square-ended apse, with a lofty *cimborio* over the Crossing. A plainly-vaulted ceiling rises from a cornice supported upon engaged Corinthian columns, and the strictest unity of style, together with a sparing use of ornamentation, is shown throughout—even to the retablos of the Capilla Mayor and side chapels. A fine, tile dado—of the *azulejos* for which Valencia is still famous—about eight feet high, runs all round the church, and is continued round the cloisters on the south side. These cloisters are not so good as the church—are much more Herrera-like. They are double-staged, in mixed Doric and Ionic orders, and can only boast in the way of attraction of a very pure series of Carrara marble columns, set upon square stone plinths.

The ordinary sight-seer may, however, find something in the Patriarca much more to his mind than either Ribalta or Herrera. There is a very wonderful crucifix, kept behind the *Last Supper*, by whom carved, or at what date, no one knows. It is worth climbing up to make a close inspection of this image, for it is really a beautiful piece of workmanship—probably

Italian. It is miraculous, of course, and as such, apart from its intrinsic worth, forms an object of deepest veneration. Every Friday morning, at ten o'clock, a penitential service takes place in the church, which is darkened as for some great mass for the dead. As the *Miserere* is being sung Ribalta's picture is lowered, three veils—first lilac, then gray, finally black—are slowly and noiselessly withdrawn, and a ray of light cunningly thrown upon the bent head of the suddenly-revealed figure of our Saviour. The admirable machinery of the whole thing—machinery in the widest sense of the term—and the intensely devotional attitude of the sable-robed congregation, preserve the scene from any objectionably theatrical effect, and the agony is not too long drawn-out, for in a few moments the curtains close up, and a joyous chant gives relief to all pent-up feeling. The service has of late years, unfortunately, been shorn of many of its impressive adjuncts, but it still possesses a powerful attraction.

There is another miraculous Christ in San Salvador, with exactly the same parentage and history as the Burgos image. El Cristo de Beirut, as it is called, was carved—*se dice*—by Nicodemus, and came sailing over the seas to Valencia like its Burgos counterpart, and Santiago. San Salvador itself presents the ordinary type of Valencian ecclesiastical architecture—debased Corinthian—and, in common with nearly all the sacred edifices here, need not be looked at twice.

Not so La Seo, however—the Cathedral. There is a

vast amount of poor Italian work about it, certainly, and the whole place has been wretchedly modernised, but still, after conquering some natural first emotions of horror and disgust, there are to be found here and there such altogether good bits of work as positively endear the church to one after a while. Such is the nobly treated octagonal *cimborio*, of rich Gothic: such again are the north and south transept façades, of Early and Middle pointed styles respectively, and most satisfactory alike in composition and detail. The view of the former, from the fountain in the centre of the Plaza de la Audencia, is one of those delights to which we may return day after day with ever-increasing pleasure and profit,—whether taken as a whole, or searched into with an opera-glass. Every portion is taken up with moulding, sculpturing, panelling, or tracery, so exquisite in design and execution that there is no nauseating through over-richness; while the whole façade—the great doorway ‘*de los apóstoles*’ below, the delicate rose window above, with its crown of crocketed arch and panelling, and the double-staged *cimborio* set back behind the rest—is so harmonious in all its parts that it would be quite spoiled by the elimination of any one.

Then, at the south-west angle of the church, there is a very lovely fourteenth-century *Sala Capitular*, with a delicately-groined stone roof, and a portion of the old cathedral *trascoro* which makes one more bitter than ever against the meddling Antonio Gilabert and those

who aided and abetted him in his work of renovation a hundred and twenty years ago. Close at hand, in the adjoining sacristy, there are a couple of wonderful altar frontals to be seen, brought here from London when Henry VIII. despoiled St. Paul's, and sold its choicest furnishings. The field is of gold thread, and the subjects, taken from the Crucifixion and Resurrection, are embroidered upon it in silk and silver.

"Rich," the Valencian clergy love to call their Mother church, and point with pride, as they speak, to the fifty chapels, gorgeous in their marble dressing and stucco ornamentation. But rich she really is in some of her records, in the unhurt old work, or in such art treasures as these *ternos*, or the masterly paintings of Juanes and Ribalta.

Some of these records commence hard by—in the Calle del Mar—where, in the *Casa Natalicia*, the patron of Valencia, San Vicente Ferrer, was born. To others of her saintly sons—certain of the Borjas, Tomás de Villanueva, or Luis Beltran, the self-denying, toiling missionary—one can pay a ready homage; but no problem in saint lore is more difficult of solution, by those who are not just of his persuasions, than what to think of San Vicente Ferrer. And one is obliged to think about him in Spain, because memorials of his doings crop up all over the country. A man of blameless private life, modest and self-denying, entirely devout and sincere in his religion, beautiful and eloquent in his moral suasion. And then, judged by all broad

canons of human life and polity, without rational defence in his not only cruel, not only vindictive, but utterly unscrupulous persecution of those who ventured to appeal from Vicente Ferrer to Vicente Ferrer's God.

Not quite accountable for his actions, we will hope, through the very fervour of his religious convictions.

XV.

TARRAGONA.

IF one could but make Tarragona beloved as she deserves! Not under false pretences. Not for those pretty things of Nature which a too exuberant genius has sometimes planted here—oak forests, soft verdure, park-like land and so forth. Not even for anything that the city is in herself—unless one could return to childish appreciation of dust, and mud pies. But for all that she can yield in the way of antiquarian record and interest; for her treasures of infinitely beautiful architectural work; for her simple kindness, and good fellowship; for her glorious colouring, her brilliant sky, her gorgeous sunsets, her outlook over the long sweep of rich country, rock-bound coast and glittering sea.

The traveller has often reason to groan over the wild and desolate places of the Peninsula, and here, at first sight, it would seem as if one had come upon yet another abode of dreariness. But let us tarry for a while, and walk leisurely, and heedfully, over cultivated plain and waste upland, from—say—Cape Salou, crossing the Reus and Lérida high roads, past the Roman aqueduct, so

away to the sea and along the coast to Altafulla, with its overhanging castle and cliffs of Tamarit. And then let us note how it will all dwell thenceforward in our minds. This far-reaching plain, with its villages and homesteads, its brightly-coloured *torres* and gardens, its orange groves and vineyards, its patches of olive and fig trees, is the rich fringe—so to speak—of the dark brown hills which rise away to the north-west. It is an obedient, ungrudging Mother earth. For her no perceptible winter rest, no interval of luxuriant carelessness, no grateful forest shade, no satisfying rain from summer clouds. She is a very beast of burden, with every movement consecrated to the service of her master Man.

Until the waves come into view. Then, just where the long slope, weary of the tale of its own fruitfulness, turns resolutely—half impatiently—to bury itself in the ocean, there is a broad strip of disputed territory, held by Nature, claimed by man. Here the ancient pine wood still holds its ground against the encroachings of cultivation, and a variegated carpeting of lavender, rosemary, thyme and palmito encircles and makes bright the irregular patches of vine, maize and corn, or the dark earth freshly turned up by the spade.

A coyly obstinate resistance at the last. An up-turned bulwarking of broken cliff, with indented coves where the seaweed floats lazily in rocky cradles brimming over with darkly green water. Beyond, a fringing of yellow sand—and then the blue wavelets of the

Mediterranean dancing merrily over their willing prey.*

But we must not press on too eagerly towards Tarragona, not even if basely tempted by the prospective comforts of the pleasantly ordered Fonda de Paris, or by a desire to enjoy the real welcome with which our friendly hosts will meet us. There is beautiful scenery to be noted nearly all the way from Valencia,—this same fruitful plain on the left, backed by great brown hills, and the lovely sea upon the right. In the Tortosa region, indeed, the country is so green and pretty that one might fancy oneself in Devonshire, or Sussex, if only the olives and *algarrobas* would change into oaks and elms.

And there is one point of such interest that a halt must be made at it. Murviedro, the place is styled now, but if we give these *muri veteres* their old name of Saguntum, what records are thereby evoked! 'Saguntum' stands, oddly enough, upon our railway tickets—the last place where one would expect to find antiquated things preserved—and it has very much the same sort of appearance that 'Sodom,' or 'Gomorrhah' would have. It is a wild spot—a great, bare hill, with white houses, long lines of wall, and, finally, an old

* The array of wild flowers, sweet scented herbs and heaths in spring and autumn here is something quite marvellous. And, cold as Tarragona is supposed to be, I have met with a great variety of insect life as early as the beginning of March and as late as November—locusts in abundance, and such heat-lovers as *P. Daplidice*, *G. Cleopatra*, and *T. Rumina*.—[J. L.]



castle by way of crown. In its palmy days, when it was so magnificent a seaport city, so rich, so powerful, as to be for long a bone of contention between the two most self-assertive powers the world has, perhaps, ever seen, Saguntum must have been an altogether desirable place. But for two thousand years it has been not much else than a heap of ruins, and has, moreover, been so given up to its grief and dolefulness that even the faithful sea has turned from it at last, and gone three or four miles away. Still it is a spot to be seen, and to be tenderly walked over—if only to form an idea of the fate which will come in its day, and in their turn, upon all our great and proud cities, and to do homage to one of the most wonderful acts of self-sacrifice and dogged heroism in history. For it was not only the city that was destroyed two thousand years ago. Its inhabitants shared the same fate, rather than bow their necks to any foreign ruler. They had held the place for nearly a year, against the flower of the Carthaginian army, led by Hannibal himself, and now when there were only three alternatives—death by starvation, death by violence, or submission—the election was made for heroism. They brought all their household gods and valuables into the great square, and then, while the men sallied forth from the gates to meet and to avenge their fate, the women lighted their own funeral pile within the city, and cast themselves, with their children, into the flames.

Tarragona has her ancient records too—as ancient

as those of Greek Saguntum. She has her grand Cyclopean walls and gateways, her Phœnician well, her so-called 'tomb' of the Scipios, her amphitheatre, her Capitol, and her Roman aqueduct striding across the valley and seemingly defying Time to destroy it. These, and a long series of less important remains, which are only revealed to those who are willing to wait, and watch, and care for such things, speak, with an eloquence unsurpassed by any other city of the Peninsula, of the days when there was here a 'Colonia togata,' with perhaps a million inhabitants, and stately in every investiture of government, art and luxury.

Unlike the large Spanish family of Saguntums, however, Tarragona has no intention of resting satisfied with a great yesterday, but is intent upon making a future for herself. Between visit and visit the place grows almost out of recognition. Ten years ago it was just a dull, dry, sleepy old town, wherein what was new reminded one strongly of the inadvisable tailoring denounced in Scripture; where the very food was flavoured with the dust of the no doubt estimable, but not over-nice, dead, while the wine was soured by its reflections upon a perchance glorious past, and by a persistent uncaring for a wholesome present. A place to be invaded for purposes of observation and study, held for as long as was possible against countless foes of one's peace of mind, and hastily abandoned as soon as one's reconnoitring was done. But now the new has overgrown the old, has put away its look of