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R 32198

ANTIGUOS Y MODERNOS
Apartado 57.072
T. 231 44 55 - 28080 Madrid

Ret Potiche - DeiBosc

Bognes i March 1050 Dray accept this telle Thatch which is intended only for my our Tamely, La very few Friends assess it Man, Imay, as a mark of my Esteem for your Character, Lana hooffaltho'so small ) of the Triandly Tantiments of yours very huly Mi. T. Handwick Manager

#### REMINISCENCES

OF

### AN EXCURSION

TO

### MADRID.

ACROSS THE PYRENEES,

IN

1834.

CHICHESTER:
PRINTED BY G. PULLINGER.
1850.

# REMINISCENCES

MAGO

## AN EXCUESION

Por

### MADRID,

FERREST THE CANALAST THOSE

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### REMINISCENCES

OF AN

### EXCURSION TO MADRID

IN

1834.

#### MY VERY DEAR HENRY,

I am induced to commit these Reminiscences to paper, not in the presumptuous expectation, that they may be amusing to others, but in the hope, that in a leisure hour, they may amuse you; and, although, perhaps it was only from kind feeling on your part, that you expressed a wish to see them; still I flatter myself in the hope that they may not be devoid of in-

terest at least, to the members of my own family.

Having then undertaken to proceed to Madrid, for a particular purpose from Paris, I was under the necessity of taking the unfrequented central route through the Pyrenees, as the cholera was raging most severely at Barcelona, and the civil war was at that time at its greatest height in the provinces of Alava, Burgos, and Guipuscoa.

I quitted Paris then at the commencement of October, 1834, in the coupé of the diligence for Bordeaux, accompanied by a German gentleman, who understood the Spanish language; and was to me as an interpreter; for your kind sister Emma, would not otherwise, in her filial affection, allow me, ignorant of the language, to enter into Spain, in it's then disturbed state; and especially so, at that time; for no traveller

then expected to travel in that country, without being subject to the penalty, at least, of being plundered and robbed; which was, in fact, the case, only the week preceding, with two diplomatists of her acquaintance, who were thus dealt with; but being Englishmen, they escaped without further personal illtreatment.

This then induced me to learn a few Spanish words for precaution's sake, and they were subsequently of the greatest service to me.

Well, we proceeded by the regular route of Orleans, Blois and Tours, skirting the beautiful Loire, from thence through Poitiers and Angoulème, and then crossed the Dordogne. I believe there is now a bridge over that river, which is rapid and broad; as, on my return to Paris, I heard the project discussed in the Chambre des Deputês; and very

necessary was it, for, on arriving at its banks, I remember, we entered a very awkward ferry-boat, that was moved by four or five horses, working a central wheel, which with the stupidity of the ferryman and rapidity of the current, was contrived to be run several times at improper places on the shore, which made it really dangerous, before we could effect a safe landing on the other side.

We arrived at Bordeaux about noon, after three nights and two days travel, and it is certainly a most beautiful town, from its magnificent buildings, squares and streets, these added to its fine quay and bridge built by Bonaparte, over the Garonne, which at that part is wide and expansive, render it one of the finest towns in Europe; and it has in consequence become the residence of many of the rich South Americans from Mexico and elsewhere, who having escaped from

that country, and from the troubles and dangers consequent upon the instability of their governments, have taken refuge there.

We stayed at Bordeaux a day and a half, and from the German's acquaintance, dined with the Consul from the King of Saxony, who entertained us most hospitably.

The following morning very early, we proceeded in a steam-boat up the Garonne, for we preferred that route to crossing the Sandy Landes. But in ascending fifty miles up the river to Logrone, we were frequently detained by our boat being checked on shallows, on one of which I also saw fixed another boat that was descending. We also passed some mountains, which I was informed, were composed of beds of oystershells, thus verifying the statement of the great naturalist, Cuvier, who says, that from the different strata on which Paris itself is

built, it is evidently manifested, that in former ages, the site of the town itself, with the continent of Europe, was at many and various times under the sea immersed. Different marine strata, such as cockle shells, shingle, sea sand, &c. being found at different elevations. Yes, through many, many ages, "montes volomtur aquarum," and in the lapse of time, what was then the sea, is now the land. Oh, how it brings the inspired Psalmist to our recollection, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea, Thou stillest the waves thereof, when they arise; the heavens are thine, the earth also is thine, Thou hast laid the foundation of the round world and all that therein is." Oh, how humble should it make us. Pray pardon this digression, for I suspect that I may give you many, many more.

I remember likewise, that an intelligent

passenger in the boat, hearing that I was about to enter Spain, particularly recommended me not to carry arms, for I should find them useless and dangerous, inasmuch as the traveller was watched, his motions observed, and when met at a corner, if on seeing a hat or hearing a noise, he prepared to be ready with his arms, he would be instantly shot without seeing his enemy. All such were valuable hints.

Landing then near Logrone, we were surrounded by ragged men, women and children, each contending to convey our baggage to the small town or village, which was about half a mile distant. There we entered a shabby covered cart, and proceeded about five miles farther, where we found another diligence, which after crossing the upper part of the Garonne in the middle of the night, carried us by Auch in the Basses Py-

renees to Tarbes, which we reached at twelve the following night. But I cannot pass by Auch without mentioning, that a very particular friend of mine, the Count de Castelbojue, has his landed property in that neighbourhood; and he happened to be residing there at the time, with his most amiable family. To him then I wrote, as the diligence stopped to bait, regretting much my being forced to pass without seeing him; and, much was I surprised sometime after, at receiving a letter from him, which found me at Madrid, expressing most strongly his kind sentiments, and insisting that I should indemnify them, his most agreeable family, by staying some time with him and his friends on my return. This is only one amongst his grateful attentions, for civilities I had formerly been able to shew to him. But let me return to my journey.

From Tarbes we started early for Pau. and it was with the morning light in ascending an elevation to ease the horses, that we first beheld the stupendous Pyrenees. Stupendous indeed! for they appeared to us mountains upon mountains, as "Ossa upon Pelion!" and would have been a fine Point d'appui, "according to fabulous history, from which, the giants might have assailed the heavens, to war against the Gods. Mountains upon our left reaching to the clouds. whilst beyond and far above those clouds we saw the black tops of other mountainsin fact. I inquired what those black tops were; and on being informed that they were also distant mountains, I could not help exclaiming-" Bold indeed must the man have been, who first dared to attempt their passage!"

We reached Pau after three hours' drive,

when we saw the castle of Henry IV. and his cradle, (a turtle's shell,) in which the hero was nursed. The description of the town has been so often given, that I shall not attempt it; but I remember that on making inquiries and conversing about Spain with an intelligent resident, to whom I had an introductory letter, he stated, "that torrents of blood would be shed before the government of that country could be settled," a candid but rather a startling observation to one who was about to commit himself therein.

Early the following day, we got into the diligence for Oléron; and I was much pleased with an elderly lady, who upon hearing of our Trans-Pyrenean intentions, exclaimed, that we had undertaken a most difficult task; but that she might be useful in introducing us to a Mr. Aranjuez, at Oléron, a considerable

merchant, who imported constantly across the mountains large quantities of wool from Spain. To him therefore we immediately proceeded on our arrival, and found him engaged in his trade in a large field, where he employed numbers of Basque women in picking and cleaning his wool. Some of the women were pretty brunettes, with black sparkling eyes, but rather small features, and I remember them, with much pleasure. Mr. Aranjuez also was very obliging and sent for his mule contractor, named Ramon d'Estuja, that we might make our bargain with him, to take us across the mountains to Zaragoza; unfortunately the contractor was not to be found at the time, but was to follow us to Bedos, (the next stage, about ten miles distant towards the mountains, for Oléron is at their feet;) I say unfortunately, for when at Bedos, he saw the German gentleman, my

travelling companion, who engaged with him for three mules and a man, (or arriero,) to drive them, to carry ourselves and baggage to Zaragoza. But he did not stipulate that he should take us to the best inns or private houses, in the towns or places, where we were to stop; and we suffered accordingly.

I could not help then expressing my dissatisfaction, because Mr. Aranjuez had cautioned us particularly upon that point, and I trust that I did it, for policy's sake, in as mild and measured terms as possible; but the German took the remark in dudgeon, and was in a most extraordinary manner, very sulky, whether national or not, I could not tell, for he would hardly speak to me for several days, and not a word that night, though we slept at Bedos, almost in conjoined beds. The following day also, he rode away from me to Urdos, about ten miles further in the

mountains, and the last town on the French frontier.

The road to which town, in the mountains, is made and perforated as it were in successive ages by the precipitous torrents, and is, with the vallies, most picturesque; there also, I was happy to have had it in my power, to have been of service to the German, though, upon second thoughts, it must have been in a measure, selfish on my part, as from ignorance of the Spanish language, I could not well have done without him; and here I cannot help alluding to the advantage of a German education, for he could equally speak Latin and English, French and Spanish.

The French Officers in garrison then at Urdos, feeling themselves isolated in such a place, were most happy to meet with a conversational stranger, and in conversation, they stated to me, as they were the supervisors of our passports, that the German's description in his passport (and they did not appear to like the man) did not correspond with his person, inasmuch as he was described, as only of such an height, when in fact he was so much taller; rather an awkward and in most cases a fatal difficulty. but when I informed them that the difference was between the French and German measure, they obligingly accepted the explanation and allowed him to proceed. In truth, I found the officers very sociable and communicative, and they warned me that I was about to undertake "un voyage bien pénible et avec beaucoup de désagrèments."-On departing from them also, about two o'clock, P. M., they all came "pour faire leurs adieux," and wished me "un bon voyage;" but I could not help jocosely remarking, that

it was rather "un mauvais commencement." as my mule, in their presence, began to exhibit his power of kicking off, whilst I had to exhibit mine of sticking on. The animal from carrying wool, apparently, preferring inanimate to animate burthens; and as we proceeded, he exhibited so much unpleasant kicking propensity on the tops of steep descents and precipices, that tossed on his back, like the frail bark on the stormy waves, I thought it better to trust to my own, than to his legs. So I proceeded on foot, thus meditating, and fancied although the mule was not like Balaam's ass, gifted with speech, that he might say to himself,

Lo, when I kick,

Then you must stick,

Or else, you will be off, sir;

So, now take care,

Or, off you are,

And, mine will be the laugh, sir.

Still, you may say, away with your fancies and mule propensities, with your versifications, &c. &c. All this may suit the mountains of the Pyrenees, but you should fly at higher game, you should in poetic ardour aim at the lofty regions of Parnassus, to taste the Pireian spring. But to this I respond, those regions are far, very far beyond my reach, I aim at much lower game, and think

The worse the pun,
The more the fun.

My object being to amuse you and in part, myself, in detailing the circumstances—

To please us both then is my aim, So, if you're pleased, I win my game.

And now to my narrative. A storm then came on in the mountains, and so violent, that the German, in proof of his English reading, said, that it beggared Sir Walter

Scott's descriptions; the rain also poured so heavily, that it very much filled the water-courses, which are the only mountain paths in those regions; and encumbered as I was with my cloak, to defend me from the rain, I had much difficulty in proceeding between large stones, the water in places being up to my knees; so much so. that the German afterwards said, he thought my physique could not have stood it; for I ought perhaps to remind you, that I was then in my sixty-third year; but still the German, apparently thinking only of himself, proceeded with his mule, whilst mine, with the other mule carrying the baggage, was driven with him, and thus they preceded me so far, that night coming on, I could not see them; fortunately, flashes of lightning without thunder (which surprised me very much) lighted my path, yes, "Thy lightnings gave



shine unto the world;" and as I hope and trust, the fear of the Lord always accompanies me, I might then say, likewise, with the Psalmist, "Thy word is a lantern to my feet, and a light unto my paths." Yes, they lighted my paths, until I came to a spot, so wet, and full of springs, that I could neither proceed nor keep my feet; consequently after falling twice or thrice in the water, and remembering the old French saying, "Aide toi, et Ciel t'aidera," I hallooed, and it was time I should, for when I recollect, and can now coolly consider it, my situation was any thing but agreeable, indeed it was very, very awkward; for, debilitated as I was, and without weapons of defence, I might have been left as a prey for the wolves, or the wolf dogs, which I heard at a distance in the dreary waste; but luckily, or rather providentially, for I feel, at that, and many other times in

my life, I should sing again with the Psalmist, "As for me, I will sing of Thy power, and will praise Thy mercy betimes in the morning, for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble." Providentially then, as they were ascending another mountain, the arriero heard my voice from the valley, and returned with my mule, on which I was lifted, and my wet and very heavy cloak, weighing, as the man said, 100lbs. or more, was put across him.

His kicking then was of service to me, as the anxiety to keep on, prevented, I suppose, my catching cold, for we had three or four miles more in the darkness, to reach the first Spanish halting place of Canfran, (or some such name,) a very wretched town or village, such as Urdos, on the French side, where there was no house, that would be thought by an Englishman to have the appearance of comfort.

From Urdos, about a quarter of a mile, is the quarantine station, a spot with a hut or two, walled in a space of about sixty yards in diameter, and fixed, I suppose, as some boundary line between the two countries; for not perceiving any other marks in those wild mountains, it appeared to me, as if the boundaries between France and Spain were very much defined by the courses of the rivers from their springs. For France, when their direction is northward; and for Spain, where they seek an outlet to the south.

"He watereth the hills from above, He sendeth the springs into the rivers, which run among the hills." How beautifully descriptive is the Psalmist, also in these lines, and so appropriate to the scene before me.

Happy indeed was I, when I arrived at Corion, or Canfran, as, "any port in a storm," and the storm had been, and was

tremendous, although the prospect of accommodation was far from cheering; inasmuch as the entrance into the place of rest and entertainment, was a kind of arched cellar, a stable for the mules, in which we dismounted, it reminded me of Gil Blas' descent into the cave of the banditti, and we then ascended a broadish staircase, that never could have been washed, leading us into a kind of hay-loft, or reception room, in which was a large and wide chimney, wherein a fire was lighted, and then, with the lights of pine branches for candles, we discovered at the farther end, four beds, and beyond, a closet or small room, containing another bed, with a wicketinstead of a window, to enable, as I supposed, the tenant brigand or smuggler, in case of need, to escape over the mountains, which said mountains almost touched the said wicket. Of this closet I claimed the possession, and then returned to the chimney in the elegant reception room, where with Dame Leonarda, cooking for us, I merrily enjoyed the singular scene and heartily eat some eggs, drying myself as well as I could, by the fire, thinking, that the said scene would have been a fine subject for a painter, a Hobbemeyer, or a Murillo. Still, fatigue soon made my eyelids heavy; and I betook myself to the bandit's or smuggler's bed, where I got refreshed by a kind of cat's sleep, having first said my prayers, and added to my journal, (which is lost,) by writing also on my knees with the bed for a table. Well may I call it cat's sleep, for my German companion complained in the morning, that in the fourbedded chamber, or reception room, his sleep was much disturbed by the cats running over his face. These, thought I, are

some of the fruits of your improvident bargain with the mule contractor; but it was of no use complaining, as more sulkiness on his part, would have been the order of the day.

We then proceeded early the next morning; and on departing, were, as it appeared to me, rather too strongly eyed by three or four suspicious cut throat looking fellows, a fine muscular race of men, who scowlingly let us pass, seeming to think, that we were at their mercy, and so we were, whatever face we might put on: I have often since thought of their forbearance; yes, forbearance, for hitherto we had met no officials, neither soldier nor custom-house officer; and in those out of the way places, there is no protection from the law, right gives way to might,