



stands single, towering over an hilly country, like a pile of grotto work or Gothic spires. Its height is about three thousand three hundred feet.

We ascended by the steepest road, as that for carriages winds quite round, and requires half a day's travelling. After two hours tedious ride from east to west, up a narrow path cut out of the side of gullies and precipices, we reached the highest part of the road, and turned round the easternmost point of the mountain, near the deserted hermitage of Saint Michael. Here we came in sight of the convent, placed in a nook of the mountain; it seems as if vast torrents of water, or some violent convulsion of nature, had split the eastern face of Montserrat, and formed in the cleft a sufficient platform to build the monastery upon. The Llobregat roars at the bottom, and perpendicular walls of rock, of prodigious height, rise from the water edge near half-way up the mountain. Upon these masses of white stone rests the small piece of level ground which the monks inhabit. Close behind the abbey, and in some parts impending over it, huge cliffs shoot up in a semicircle to a stupendous elevation; their summits are split into sharp cones, pillars, pipes, and other odd shapes, blanched and bare; but the interstices are filled up with forests of evergreen and deciduous trees and plants. Fifteen hermitages are placed among the woods; nay, some of them on the very pinnacles of the rocks, and in cavities hewn out of the

loftiest of these pyramids. The prospect is not only astonishing, but absolutely unnatural. These rocks are composed of limestones of different colours, glued together by a sand, and a yellow calcareous earth. In some parts they consist of freestone and white quartz, mixed with some touchstone. There may perhaps be reason to suspect fire to have been a principal agent in the formation of this insulated mountain.

Having brought a letter for the abbot, whom we found a polite, sensible ecclesiastic, a native of Estremadura, we were lodged and entertained in the convent. I cannot say much in favour of the cookery; it cost us some wry faces to get down the saffron soup and spiced ragouts. After dinner a plate of caraways, and a salver of wine, was handed about; which brought to my mind the treat Justice Shallow offers Sir John Falstaff in his orchard.

This is one of the forty-five religious houses of the Spanish congregation of the order of Saint Benedict; their general chapter is held every fourth year at Valladolid, where the deputies choose abbots and other dignitaries for the ensuing Quadrennium. In this monastery, they elect for abbot a Catalan and a Castilian alternately. Their possessions are great, consisting of nine villages lying to the south of the mountain; but the king has lately curtailed their income about six thousand livres a year, by appropriating to his own use the best
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house in each village, some of which, with their tythes, are worth 200 dollars per annum. Their original foundation, in 866, gave them nothing but the mountain; and to donations and œconomy they owe the great increase of their landed property. They are bound to feed and harbour, for three days, all pilgrims that come up to pay their homage to the Virgin; the allowance is a luncheon of bread in the morning, as much more, with broth, at noon, and bread again at night. About three years ago, the king proposed to them to abolish this obligation of hospitality, on condition that the convent should subscribe a fixed sum towards the establishment of a poor-house in Barcelona. The principals of the abbey were inclined to accept of the proposal, but the mob of monks opposed it vehemently; and, such a scheme being very contrary to the interests of the miraculous image, she resented it highly, and, according to her old custom, vanished in anger from the altar. Soon after, she was discovered in the cave where she was originally found, nor would she stir, till the intended innovation was overruled. It was thought expedient to wink at this juggling, not to alarm the common people, who are not sufficiently enlightened to see through such gross impositions.

The number of professed monks is 76, of lay-brothers 28, and of singing-boys 25, besides physician, surgeon, and servants.

Having

Having breakfasted very early, a German monk waited upon us to shew us the church. It is gloomy, and the gilding much sullied with the smoke of eighty-five lamps of silver, of various forms and sizes, that hang round the cornice of the sanctuary. Funds have been bequeathed by different devotees for furnishing them with oil.

The choir above stairs is decorated with the life of Christ in good wooden carving. A gallery runs on each side of the chancel, for the convenience of the monks. A large iron grate divides the church from the chapel of the Virgin, where the image stands, in a nich over the altar, before which burn four tapers in large silver candlesticks, the present of the duke of Medina Celi. In the sacristy, and passages leading to it, are presses and cupboards full of relicks and ornaments, of gold, silver, and precious stones; they pointed out to us, as the most remarkable, two crowns for the Virgin and her Son, of inestimable value, some large diamond rings, an excellent cameo of Medusa's head, the Roman emperors in alabaster, the sword of Saint Ignatius, and the chest that contains the ashes of a famous brother, John Guarin, of whom they relate the same story as that given in the Spectator of a Turkish fanton and the sultan's daughter. They differ however in the following circumstance—The Catalan anchoret repents of his crime, and lives seven years on all fours like a wild beast. The earl of Barcelona, whose daughter John had ravished and murdered, catches

catches the savage in his hunting-toils, and brings him as a shew to the city; when behold! the earl's son, only a month old, speaks aloud, and bids John arise, for his sins are forgiven. The easy prince pardons him also, and all of them go in quest of the body of the Princess. To their great astonishment, they meet her restored to life by the Virgin Mary, and as beautiful and young as ever. It is not said that she recovered her virginity; that is a miracle never once attempted by any saint in the calendar; however, she liked the mountain so well, that she there founded a monastery, in which she ended her days as a nun.

Immense is the quantity of votive offerings to this miraculous statue; and, as nothing can be rejected or otherwise disposed of, the shelves are crowded with most whimsical *Ex votos*, viz. silver legs, fingers, breasts, earrings, watches, two-wheeled chaises, boats, carts, and such-like trumpery.

From the sacristy we went up to the *Camarines*, small rooms behind the high altar, hung with paintings, several of which are very good. A strong silver-plated door being thrown open, we were bid to lean forward, and kiss the hand of *Nuestra Senora*. It is half worn away by the eager kisses of its votaries, but we could not ascertain whether it be marble or silver, as it is painted black. The face of the mother is regularly handsome, but the colour of a negro-woman.

Having

Having seen every place about the convent, where they are now building a new wing, and blasting a great deal of the rock to enlarge the gardens, we set out for the hermitages, and took the short way, up a crevice between two huge masses of rock, where in rainy weather the waters dash down in furious torrents. We counted six hundred holes or steps, so steep and perpendicular that from below we did not discern the least track. A hand-rail, and a few seats to take breath upon, enabled us to perform this scalade. Soon after, we arrived, through a wilderness of evergreens, at the narrow platform where the first hermit dwells. His cells, kitchen, chapel, and gardens, are admirably neat and romantic, built upon various patches of level on the tops of precipices. The view from it is wild, and in such a fine clear morning most delightful. The hermit seemed a chearful, simple old man, in whose mind forty years retirement had obliterated all worldly ideas. The hermits are all clad in brown habits, and wear long beards; their way of life is uncomfortable, and their respective limits very much confined. They rise at two every morning, ring out their bell, and pray till it is time to go to mass at the hermitage, called the *Parish*; it is always said at break of day: some of them have above two hours walk down to it. The convent allows them bread, wine, salt, oil, one pair of shoes, and one pair of stockings a year, with twenty-five reals a month for other necessaries. A couple
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of men are kept to assist them in their labour, each in their turn. A mule carries up their provisions twice a week, and is occasionally driven to Barcelona for salt-fish, and other things, which they buy by clubbing together. They get some helps from the convent, in return for flowers, greens, &c. which they send down as presents. They never eat meat, or converse with each other: their noviceship is very severe, for they must undergo six months service in the infirmary of the abbey, one year among the novices, and six years further trial, before they are suffered to go up to an hermitage; which they cannot obtain but by the unanimous consent of the whole chapter. They make every vow of the monks, and, over and above, one of never quitting the mountain; but none of them are allowed to enter into orders. Their first habitation is always the most remote from the convent, and they descend according as vacancies happen in the lower cells.

Having left a small present in the chapel-window, we continued our walk: wherever the winding paths are level, nothing can be more agreeable than to saunter through the close woods and sweet wilderesses that fill up the spaces between the rocks. It is impossible to give you an adequate idea of the sublime views and uncouth appearance of the different parts of the mountain; a painter or a botanist might wander here many days with pleasure and profit. There are few evergreens in Eu-

rope that may not be found here, besides a great variety of deciduous plants. The apothecary of the house has a list of four hundred and thirty-seven species of plants, and forty of trees. The greatest hardship here is a scarcity of good water. Except one spring at the parish, and another at the convent, they have no other than cistern-water, and that bad enough; this in summer is a terrible inconvenience, and gives the lye to the florid descriptions I have read of the purling streams and beautiful cascades tumbling down on every side from the broken rocks. The want of water is so great, that neither wolf, bear, nor other wild beast, is ever seen on the mountain.

The second hermitage we came to, stands on a point of the rock, over a precipice that descends almost to the very bed of the river; my head was near turning with looking down. The prospect is inimitably grand, extending over the northern and eastern parts of the province, which are very hilly and bare, bounded by the mountains of Rouffillon. The true Pyreneans appear only through some breaks in that chain. Manresa, where Inigo de Loyola made his first spiritual retreat, is the principal town in the view. In a clear day, they assured us they could see Majorca, which is one hundred and eighty-one miles distant. Upon the round rock that hangs over the hermit's cell was formerly a castle, with its cisterns and drawbridge, where some banditti harboured.

ed. From this strong hold they made excursions to pillage the neighbouring vallies. By rolling down stones, they kept the monks in perpetual alarm, and obliged them to send up whatever provisions were wanted in the garrison. At last, a few miquelets climbed up the rock from tree to tree, like so many squirrels, surprized the fort, and destroyed this nest of robbers. In commemoration of this event, the hermitage is dedicated to Saint Dimas, a saint, I presume, you never heard of in your life. You must know he is the good thief in the gospel.

At la Trinidad, the next cell we walked to, the monks by turns go up to pass a few days in summer by way of recreation. The hermit has many rooms, and is allowed a boy to wait upon him. He gave us a glass of good Sitges wine, and a pinch of admirable snuff, made from tobacco raised in his own garden. The officers of the customs have extended their tyranny even to these solitudes, and sent orders that no more tobacco be suffered to grow.

Having scrambled up to one or two more hermitages, we found our curiosity satisfied, as, except in point of extensiveness of prospect, they varied very little from those we had already seen; and therefore we turned down another path, which led us to the dwelling of the vicar, a monk who during four years takes upon him the direction of the hermits.

Lower down we arrived at Santa Cecilia, the parish church, where every morning the silent inhabitants of this *Thebais* meet to hear mass, and perform divine service, and twice a week to confess and communicate.

About eleven, we got down to the abbey for dinner; and, having received the customary donation of blessed crosses and holy medals, mounted our mules and came to lie at Martorel. We reached Barcelona early this morning, and have been ever since making ready for our departure.

L E T T E R IX.

Barcelona, November 18, 1775.

ALL our affairs are settled for beginning our journey to Valencia to-morrow afternoon. We have agreed with a master muleteer, to furnish us with mules at the rate of fifteen reales de vellon a day for each mule, clear of all other expences whatever. If we part with him at Valencia, he is to be paid for his return, eight days; if at Alicant, ten; at Cadiz, thirty; at Madrid, fifteen; and at Lisbon, thirty. We have also hired a miquelet, compleatly accoutred, to attend us. You see we are fitted

ted out in good earnest for a long journey, which I hope will afford us some pleasant hours, to compensate for the trouble and fatigue that we foresee must frequently fall to our share. I believe you are not sorry to find I am on the point of leaving Catalonia, which must by this time be a subject my frequent letters have rendered rather tiresome to you; however, I entreat your indulgence one letter more, while I endeavour to bring together the remarks I have made on the character of this people, and all the material information my friends have furnished me with.

Catalonia is almost throughout extremely mountainous. The nature of the country appears to have great influence on that of the inhabitants, who are a hardy, active, industrious race, of a middle size, brown complexion, and strong features; their limbs well knit together, and by education and practice inured to the greatest fatigues; there are few lame or distorted persons, or beggars, to be met with among them. Their *Mocos* or mule-boys are stout walkers; some of them have been known to go from Barcelona to Madrid, and back again, in nine days, which by the high road is six hundred miles.

The loss of all their immunities, the ignominious prohibition of every weapon, even a knife, and an enormous load of taxes, have not been able to stifle their independent spirit, which breaks out upon the least stretch of arbitrary power; but within these few years, many of their

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