

imagination, and rouses within us all the romance and chivalry of our nature. We long to tread the ground rendered famous by the bloody battles between the Christians and the Moors, and to visit the magical spots mentioned by Cervantes, and consecrated by the immortal genius of Le Sage. He who undertakes, however, to carry his erratic desires into execution, must previously enter into a pious determination neither to be greatly disturbed by the numerous vexations he will meet with, nor discouraged by any unforeseen obstacles that may beset him in the prosecution of his journey. He must resolve to view everything in a spirit of good humour, unless he wishes to sacrifice to his own peculiar prejudices and opinions, the many enjoyments which he might otherwise secure.

In no country more than Spain is good-nature absolutely indispensable. Let him, to whom the generous fates have vouchsafed this precious boon—this sacred talisman, which converts whatever it touches into gold—let him, I say, thank heaven for the inestimable treasure it has bestowed, for a gift inexhaustible in its resources, and which will ever tend to lighten the burthen of the brain and heart, and strew the rugged

pathway of life with sparkling gems and fragrant flowers! But to him who is naturally peevish and fretful, who is more disposed to pick out a single grain of fault than to regard a peck of merit—who is never willing to allow any noble quality in another of which he himself is utterly deficient; and who, on the other hand, firmly believes that every evil tendency which he finds existing in his own breast, is aggravated a hundredfold in the bosom of every other individual—a person of this description, wherever else he may travel, should never for a moment dream of entering Spain. If he does so, he may be certain of encountering disappointment at every step; the phantom of pleasure may flit across his way, but only to taunt and perplex him with her deceitful presence. He may strive to clasp her in his selfish embrace, but she eludes his efforts and flies away before him. The wily goddess is not thus to be caught; *those who pursue her* in eager chase, are always mocked by her rapid and untiring flight—she is to them a laughing coquette, who repels while she attracts. It is only upon those *who seek her not* that she bestows her favours; to such she is a gentle companion, a sincere and ardent friend!

It was in the month of October, 1849, that we secured seats in the diligence at Bayonne, and started on our journey towards the lone and isolated capital of Spain. On account of the mildness of the weather, and for the sake of the extensive views of the country that would thus be afforded us, Victor B. and myself resolved to take our positions in the *berlina*, in preference to the interior of the vehicle. For the especial edification of those who are unacquainted with the different parts of a Spanish diligence, it will be as well to state, that the *berlina* is a seat constructed on top and provided with a leather covering like that of a *buggy*, which can be raised or depressed at pleasure. The view in front is of course wholly unobstructed, though in rainy weather the aperture may be entirely closed by means of a heavy curtain, which is provided for this purpose. The *berlina* is really quite a snug place, and decidedly to be recommended to those who take any particular interest in the appearance and scenery of the country through which they are passing. All that is required is an agreeable companion, and with such, beneficent fortune had already supplied me. Should these pages ever meet his eye, he

will perchance smile at the romantic recollections of by-gone days—days which to us will never return again. How many hours have we sung and laughed, and smoked and talked together, and how many wild incidents and strange adventures have bound us to each other's memories with "hooks of steel!"

The transition from France to Spain was both sudden and striking. The usual blending of scenery and character which exists upon a frontier, we did not here perceive. As soon as we had crossed the little stream, which constitutes the line of demarcation between the two countries, we felt that we were actually in Spain, and this feeling was certainly very far from being disagreeable. Our pulses perceptibly increased in the number of their beats, and our spirits at once ascended to a high point of hilarity.

We were in the very Spain of Don Quixote and Gil Blas, and a life of rare adventure opened in perspective before our eager vision. Mules, mantillas, and balconies, confusedly rushed through our minds, and filled our fancy with a strange variety of ridiculous conceits and incongruous images. We were

waxing heroic, and were quite ready for anything in the shape of an adventure (whether to fight banditti or make love to charming *senhoritas*), when our diligence suddenly stopped at the town of Irun, for the purpose of a custom-house examination—that most abominable of all “bores” to a poetical traveller. Our romantic ideas took flight in an instant. We found the officers however very civil, particularly to those who honoured them with a small fee for their important services: by-the-way, no more certain auxiliary towards winning the hearts of these gentry was ever devised, than that of presenting them with a few choice cigars. This is an offer which no Spaniard was ever known to refuse, and one which never fails in placid effect upon the disposition of the individual to whom it is tendered.

The town of Irun has rather a picturesque aspect, and the surrounding scenery is of a bold and impressive character. The streets are narrow, crooked, and badly paved; the houses lofty, and well supplied with balconies; while in regard to its women, the few damsels we saw gliding through the streets, had their faces so completely enveloped in their light and

airy mantillas, that nothing but their sparkling black eyes could be discerned.

Having finally made our escape from the custom-house officers of Irun, we proceeded with a train of ten powerful mules to St. Sebastian, this being the next town we were to pass through on our route. A fine breeze was blowing freshly from "Biscay's sleepless Bay," and not a single cloud dimmed the clear azure of the tranquil firmament above us. Nature seemed wrapt in dream-like stillness and repose. The road continued excellent, and was occasionally skirted with ornamental trees. Now and then it wound round the bases of sloping hills in graceful and harmonious curves. By the side of the highway we frequently caught glimpses of wooden crosses, which usually serve to point out the spot where some traveller has met with a violent end, either from murder or acute disease. The general aspect of the country was that of wildness and extreme solitude. We did not notice a single human habitation, until the town of St. Sebastian, in its romantic and picturesque beauty, burst suddenly upon our vision. This curious town is built upon a small isthmus, and erected at the base of a conical hill, which rises to the

height of above four thousand feet, and is crested with a venerable-looking castle, adding not a little to the historical interest of the landscape.

From its convenient situation, St. Sebastian is much resorted to at certain seasons of the year, for the purposes both of sporting and sea-bathing. Its adjacent scenery is mountainous and beautiful. As we tarried at this town nearly an hour, (principally devoted to the mastication of a sorry meal,) our own experience of it is but slight and unsatisfactory: we were in fact glad to get out of it, and to resume our journey once more through the open country. All day long we rolled onward, at a respectable pace, halting only at wretched hamlets for the sake of changing our jaded mules. In the evening we reached the city of Tolosa. Here we stopped to dine: the repast savoured strongly of oil and garlick, but as we were as keen as a couple of famished wolves, we did complete justice to the meal, wretched as it was: lighting our cigars, we ensconced ourselves in the berlina as comfortably as possible for the night.

The moon had not yet risen, though the canopy of heaven was profusely sprinkled with

stars, which on this evening seemed to shine with extraordinary brilliancy. A young Frenchman who had taken a seat with us, being somewhat of a musician, sang for us with a considerable degree of power and sweetness, several airs from favourite operas. We were but little in the mood for sleep, so we chatted together all the night of "days that had been," and happy hours that were yet to come. The excitement of our novel situation, and the agitation of our own thoughts, kept us constantly awake, yet the winged moments flew rapidly away, without producing either stupor or fatigue. The wildness and strangeness of the scenery, so different from what we had elsewhere seen, gently excited our imagination, and aroused the fitful images of dreaming fancy. So steep were some of the hills which we were obliged to cross, that oxen were several times called into requisition. On one occasion, I remember, we had no less than ten of these herculean animals attached to our diligence, besides our usual complement of nine mules and a horse. This, as can be readily supposed, was one of those indescribably ludicrous spectacles, which neither man nor saint can look upon without a smile! Never was my mind more pal-

pably confused between emotions of the sublime and ridiculous than at that moment.

Certainly, no earthly scene can be more impressive, to one of an imaginative disposition, than a still and starlight night among the everlasting rock-bound hills of Spain. The very breeze, as it steals with noiseless footstep down the sloping side of some shadowy mountain, seems like the spirit of superstition taking its lonely midnight walk throughout this silent land. The crosses, which at intervals glimmer upon the watchful sight, appear like the ghosts of the *murdered*, stretching out their long arms by the way-side as if to warn the solitary traveller of impending danger. In every glen we behold the haunt of some bloody robber, and from behind every straggling tree we anticipate his desperate spring, and expect to see the lightning gleam of his thirsty stiletto !

Absorbed in reflections of this nature, and entertained with social converse, the hours of darkness glided peacefully and swiftly by. A faint tinge along the eastern horizon, which gradually deepened into a gorgeous crimson, announced at length the approach of dawn. We were now in the centre of an extensive plain,

surrounded by an amphitheatre of mountains, and proceeding on at a lively pace through an arched avenue of trees towards a strange and imposing city, which, with its numerous spires and towers, stood in striking relief upon the summit of a considerable hill but a short distance before us. This was the city of Vittoria—the capital of the province of Alava. This place contains a population of about twelve thousand souls, and has many large and handsome edifices. Its streets present quite a gay and animated appearance, while its *alamedas* or public promenades, are tastefully laid out and well supplied with statuary and fountains. Food being here remarkably cheap, the hungry traveller may calculate upon a comparatively good meal, and if he be a smoker, I would hint to him in a friendly manner, to lay in at this place a sufficient stock of cigars for the remainder of his journey, for this is the only town on the route where he will be able to obtain even *tolerable* ones.

Again setting forth, we soon reached Miranda, an uninviting town, of two thousand inhabitants, situated upon the frontier of the Castiles. Here our passports were re-examined

and our trunks re-opened by a swarm of custom-house officials. As soon as this disagreeable business was ended, we crossed a stone bridge spanning the River Ebro. The country now presented a more cultivated and fertile appearance, though the general aspect of the scenery, however, was that of melancholy and desolation. No incidents occurred to fasten the day in our memory, but towards evening we beheld in the distance the dim form of a mighty edifice, with its forest of filigree pinnacles gilded by the rays of the setting sun. It was the famous Cathedral of Burgos upon which we gazed. We entered the city through a long and shady *alameda*, thronged with young people of both sexes, who had sallied out to take their customary evening walk. The *senhors* were completely enveloped in capacious cloaks, with one end thrown gracefully over their left shoulders, and hanging down nearly as low as their waist, while the lovely *senhoritas*, (among whom we observed several of exquisite symmetry and beauty) in their delicate mantillas and gay shawls, seemed perfectly irresistible as they moved trippingly around with the ease and tranquillity of as many snowy swans! Arriving at an hotel in the city, we

halted half-an-hour in order to *dine—to dine!* not in the aristocratic and epicurean meaning of the term, but in the signification of a starved traveller, who would eat with a relish a pair of old boots if he could not get anything better.

Burgos is a notable city, both in its present dilapidated aspect, as well as in regard to its history and interesting associations. Nearly a thousand years have elapsed since its foundation, yet it still retains in its old age many traces of its early prime. It is an excellent specimen of a venerable, Gothic Castilian city, and offers to the antiquary and artist many objects worthy of deep and studious attention. The cathedral is one of the grandest in the world. Within a few miles of the city, is the tomb of the illustrious Cid, the ancient and renowned hero of Castile. He was born in the year 1026, and died at Valencia in 1099. The present tomb was erected in 1272, by Alonzo de Sabio.

Resuming our places in the diligence, we rolled rapidly out of Burgos. Another night was before us, and as the weather was rather damp and rainy, the romance of the previous night was in a considerable measure abated. So muffling ourselves in our cloak, we calmly

composed ourselves to sleep. Thank Heaven for the sweet oblivion which soon fell upon our senses, and for the happy dreams of other stars, and other eyes, which beamed upon us in our slumbers!

We found ourselves at sunrise in the midst of a desolate plain, unrelieved by either house, or tree, or human object: during the entire day, the country continued to wear this tame and uninteresting appearance. No signs of verdure manifested themselves on any side. At one time we crossed a rocky district covered with rocks and stones of tremendous size. Tall mountains frowned upon us in awful majesty and gloom; it seemed as if we were traversing one of the barren wastes of Africa, where the constant and glaring heat of the sun had entirely exhausted the soil. My mind was never more deeply affected with emotions of sublimity, neither upon the tempestuous ocean, nor amid the Alpine heights of Switzerland. The total absence of both animal and vegetable life, forced upon me a feeling of loneliness, such as I had never experienced before. It was like wandering in solitude through an enchanted land.

At length the termination of our pilgrimage arrived. On the evening of the 20th of October, while one horn of the crescent-moon had just dropped behind the tips of the adjacent mountains, and the stars above were shining in calm magnificence upon this mystic land of love and crime, the clustering domes and spires of Spain's proud capital broke like a dream of childhood upon our senses. Swiftly we moved on through a beautiful avenue of trees, and passing without ceremony through a massive and finely sculptured gate, were translated as if by some magic influence, from the heart of a desert, into the midst of the aristocratic and splendid city, Madrid.

CHAPTER II.

IMPRESSIONS OF MADRID—THE ROYAL PALACE—THE
“PRADO” AND “MUSEO.”

MY first impressions of Madrid were quite as agreeable as I had anticipated. The massive-ness and height of the private dwellings, the innumerable jutting balconies, the various lively colours of the houses, the crowded and well-paved streets, the numerous soldiers on guard, the numbers of black-gowned priests, with hats of prodigious size, walking leisurely to and fro, and of dark-eyed senhoritas, in light mantillas, rapidly darting from place to place, forced upon my mind the startling conviction that I was actually within the walls of the luxurious metropolis of Spain.

Intending to spend several months in the city, my first object was to procure suitable and comfortable quarters for a winter residence. This is

no easy matter in Madrid, where the buildings generally are constructed more with a view to coolness through the summer, than of comfort during the winter months. Stoves are an unknown luxury, while fire-places are of such recent introduction, that it is exceedingly difficult to secure quarters supplied with this latter convenience. In this respect, however, we were singularly favoured by fortune, having succeeded, in the course of a few days, in finding apartments exactly in accordance with our desires. We lost no time in getting into them, and were soon as much at home as any two youthful bachelors could reasonably expect to be, under circumstances so isolated and peculiar.

Being now comfortably settled, we sallied out one bright afternoon to take a walk of exploration through the city. After winding through a labyrinth of narrow streets, we finally arrived at the Palace of the Queen. This edifice is built of a species of stone of snowy whiteness, which gives it a remarkably chaste and beautiful appearance. Neither in external nor internal magnificence is this palace surpassed by any in Europe, and I have doubts whether any other in the world can equal it. Its erection was

commenced in 1736, but two additional wings, which were afterwards undertaken, are not even yet completed. Its form is quadrangular, while each of its sides is above four hundred feet in length. In the centre is a *patio* or court-yard, a style prevalent in many parts of Spain, and undoubtedly derived from the Moors: a noble balustrade surrounds the roof, which is flat, and covered with lead. The principal gate is surmounted by a gallery, upheld by four handsome columns of marble. The effect is decidedly harmonious and pleasing. The situation of the Palace is elevated, and commands an extensive view over the surrounding country, the monotony of which is only relieved by the glittering stream of the Manzanares, the shaded *Alameda* upon its banks, and the majestic range of the Guadarrama in the distance. During a portion of my stay in Madrid, the summits of these mountains were mantled with snow, and often have I strolled out alone towards evening to watch from the palace heights the play of the declining sunbeams upon their silvery peaks. This constituted one of the most impressively beautiful scenes that I witnessed in Spain.

Having walked about the Palace until our

curiosity was fully gratified, we turned our steps in an opposite direction—towards that famous promenade of Madrid, the Prado. When we reached this favourite haunt, it was already in the full tide of its unrivalled splendour and brilliancy. The first glance completely enchanted us. Entering by the Calle de Alcalá (the most magnificent street I have ever beheld) the Puerta de Alcalá stood directly in front of us. This is the most splendid and elaborately carved gate of the city, and which cannot fail to excite the admiration of every one. Standing near the beautiful Fountain of Cybele, our eyes instantly glanced throughout the entire extent of that most frequented portion of the Prado, which has been styled with much appropriateness *el Salon*. *

The weather was deliciously mild, and the sky above us undimmed by a single fleecy cloud. The spectacle was one altogether dazzling; rank, fashion, and beauty, glittered in all their rich pageantry; hundreds of superb carriages with fine horses, and footmen in gay livery, were slowly moving up and down the side avenues, which were pleasantly shaded with the drooping branches of ornamental trees. Numerous fountains were spouting their delicate spray high in the

air ; mounted officers were dashing by, and thousands of well-dressed *caballeros*, with gloves and canes, were walking and talking together, while as many lovely *senhoritas*, with their airy mantillas and flashing fans, gliding gracefully over the ground, more with the ease and lightness of angelic than human beings, not only completed the picture, but gave to it in truth more than half its witchery and charm. What magnificent creatures are these daughters of sunny Spain—perfect children of nature and of love ! Their countenances are, under most circumstances, faithful chroniclers of the various thoughts which agitate their hearts ; unaccustomed to the concealment of their feelings during the magic years of youth,

“ The Spanish maid is no coquette,
Nor joys to see a lover tremble ;
And if she love, or if she hate,
Alike, she knows not to dissemble.
Her heart can ne'er be bought nor sold,
Howe'er it beats, it beats sincerely ;
And though it will not bend to gold,
'T will love you long, and love you dearly.”

The Saloon of the Prado is nearly fifteen hundred feet in length by about two hundred in

width, and is devoted entirely to the use of promenaders. On either side are shady roads for equestrians and carriages, guarded from encroachment by railings of iron. The Saloon, however, be it remembered, is but a limited portion of the Prado, which in its entire extent from the Convent of Alvela to the Portillo de Recolatos, is somewhat more than a mile and a half in length. The fountains which decorate this grand and sumptuous promenade are eight in number, and, both in their sculpture and design, merit high praise. They are composed of fine marble, and were erected during the reign of Carlos III, to whom the honour is due of having converted an open and useless spot, noted in the history of robberies and midnight assassinations, into the most delicious and beautiful thoroughfare in Europe.

The Fountain of Neptune, situated at the northern extremity of the Saloon, generally elicits the largest share of admiration. It embodies the very soul of motion and animation, and represents the God of the Sea standing in his chariot with his trident in one hand and the reins of his fiery steeds in the other, which appear to be rushing with furious speed over the

foaming billows of his watery domain. The capacious pool which surrounds the fountain, teems with living fish, which swim about as merrily as if wholly unconscious of a world beyond the narrow limits of their own little lake. Of the many noble buildings which embellish the Prado, that called the Museo, containing the national Gallery of Painting, is without doubt the most striking. This is an immense edifice, with a massive portico of granite, imposing in its general effect, though possessing but slight claims to real architectural merit. Its collection of paintings, however, is extraordinary and unique. Their aggregate number cannot be less than two thousand, while most of them are in an excellent state of preservation, and are the productions of the greatest masters of the art in the world. Among these are nearly a hundred which were removed from the Escorial during the revolutionary troubles of 1837. Velasquez, the great hero and champion of Spanish art, is to be seen only in Madrid, in all his wonderful originality and splendour. His works alone, in the Museo, are above sixty in number, and would well repay an enthusiastic artist for a weary pilgrimage to

their hallowed shrine. Next come the works of that poet of colour and dreamer of celestial design, the gifted Murillo, before whose lofty genius the rivals of his day bowed their heads. This magical painter has portrayed upon the canvas the most subtle and tender feelings of our nature, and no one can look upon his paintings without experiencing a sentiment of mingled wonder and delight.

Of the Italian school there are ten exquisite productions of Raphael, around which hovers a radiance of unearthly loveliness and purity, such as he alone was able to create. There is a sublimity of conception and a marvellous skill of execution manifest in the works of this gigantic artist, which seem almost to border upon the supernatural. What can be more divinely sweet than his beautiful countenance of the Virgin, or anything more life-like and innocent than the expressive face of the lovely infant! What surpassing richness and depth of colour, and what astonishing delicacy and power of shade! The spirit of piety broods over the surface of the canvas, and the voice of religion seems to speak from the mute lips of painted thought! The enchanting masterpiece

styled "La Perla," is decidedly the most remarkable work in the Gallery. This, which is a representation of the Sacred Family, is one of the most exquisite gems to which art ever gave birth. It formerly belonged to England, but was bought by Philip IV during the time of Cromwell, for the trifling sum of two thousand pounds, and by his orders immediately transferred to Madrid. It is much to be lamented that England should ever have allowed it to pass out of its hands. Art will strive long before it can again produce an object so perfectly sweet and beautiful as the heavenly countenance of the Virgin.

The Museo is open to the public on Sundays, and to strangers on any day of the week, on the exhibition of their passports, which, as a general rule, should always be carried about the person. As for myself, I always preferred visiting the Museo on public days, on account of the excellent opportunity thus afforded of observing the taste, grace, and beauty of the fairer portion of the Madrilenians. It may with truth be said that in no country in the world does the material woman attain so rare a degree of perfection as in Spain. Such ravishing forms,

such graces of manner and poetry of expression! Their raven tresses are usually of remarkable length, and elaborately braided with consummate taste and care, while their dark and lustrous eyes, radiant with deep thought and tender feeling, are ever beaming in tranquil beauty like the silent orbs of heaven upon some summer's eve. The *windows of the soul*—you glean from them the secret revelation of the heart; with their tell-tale glances they unfold to you more than the most eloquent words could express. If love dwell within their bosom, it scintillates its electric light from the eye—it quivers upon the rosy lip, and mantles with blushing joy the velvet cheek: concealment is impossible—you read the tale in every sidelong glance—you behold it in every sunny smile!

Leaving the Museo, we strolled through the pleasant gardens of the Buen Retiro, adjoining the Prado. These grounds are tastefully laid out, and are ornamented with numerous fountains and pieces of statuary. At the upper part is a large reservoir of pure water for the supply of the jets in the garden below. Along this, runs, on the western side, a wide walk, which is much frequented by the populace on pleasant after-

noons. On the opposite side of the pool are the reserved gardens of the royal family, into which, however, any gentleman can readily obtain admission by application to their superintendent. The most curious object in the Buen Retiro is a little Chinese pagoda, rising from the water to the height of fifty or sixty feet, and adding not a little to the varied beauty of these charming grounds.

Returning home, we visited several churches in our way. Some of them were splendidly decorated with gilding and marble, but in comparison with the grand cathedrals which are to be seen in other Spanish cities, they are as nothing. The magnificent ecclesiastical edifices of Spain are the work of former times—none have recently sprung into existence. Those which now exist are hoary with the mists of centuries, and stand like vast tombstones amid the crumbling ruins of fallen cities, which, once powerful and prosperous, worshipped at their shrines.

From the cupola of the church of Santa Cruz a fine view of the metropolis is afforded, but it is not equal in effect to that presented from the heights of the Buen Retiro gardens at sunset. From thence the city with its numerous domes