

only by the lofty mountains which towered up like spectres in the distance. No object, save an occasional man, woman, or donkey, presented itself to our notice. There was nothing upon which we could fix our eyes but the azure sky, the gigantic hills, and the steepled city from which we were gradually receding. Indeed, I should have been quite at a loss how to have wiled away the hours, had it not been for my companion, who very agreeably entertained me with the recital of some of the strange scenes through which he had passed, and startling adventures that he had experienced. The road over which we were passing was hard and smooth, occasionally flanked, in dangerous places, by a protecting wall of stone. When we had completed the first half of our journey, the huge monastery became distinctly visible, and appeared vast and imposing, even amid the tremendous mountains which cast their shadows around it. The sun was now sinking in the west, and the firmament was glowing with the gorgeous reflection of his declining beams. I never beheld a spectacle more magnificent. Everything was calculated to affect the mind with sentiments of awe and solemnity.

The intense stillness itself was fearful, while the aspect of the country on every side was naked and lonely. The mountains were bare and treeless, and the grey shadowy form of the stern old monastery, enthroned amid their heights, seemed like the earthly palace of Superstition, surrounded by the eternal rocks and hills of Spain.

Passing, at length, through a huge iron gateway, we entered the royal grounds belonging to the monastery, which, though uncultivated, were covered with a thicket of stunted trees and straggling bushes. Upon a small rock, on the left side of the entrance, was a stone cross, serving to indicate the ancient dominion of the cowl. Continuing our course through an avenue of sickly poplars and elms, we soon caught sight of the famous Escorial, which, from its plantations, and gardens, and terraces, rose in the twilight like an enchanted thing of other days. The hamlet of the Escorial is of considerable size, and contains several large stone houses for the ministry, besides a number of substantial dwellings belonging to private individuals, who, however, only tenant them when the Court happens to be resident at this place,

during the excessive heat of the midsummer months.

My companion escorted me immediately to a humble inn, where we succeeded in securing tolerable quarters for the night. Here I supped alone in a large and desolate chamber, with no company but the pretty Spanish maid who so attentively and quietly waited upon me.

Before retiring, I walked out with my companion to make an inspection of the monastery by moonlight. The mists of evening which enveloped it, gave additional sombreness to the ponderous structure, while the deep quiet of slumbering nature, and the myriads of bright stars, lent the charms of mystery and solemnity to the wild and impressive scene. I lingered about the venerable pile for more than an hour, reluctant to tear myself away, but exhausted nature finally triumphed, and I returned slowly to the hotel.

I was awakened by my companion before dawn, and away we clambered up the mountain together, like a couple of romantic madcaps, with no other object in view, than that of beholding from an elevated position, the splendid picture of a sunrise in Spain. Below us lay the grim

monastery, while, beyond it, stretched the desolate and blighted table-land, as far as the eye could penetrate.

No murmur of animated nature broke upon our ears. The elements were hushed, and the natives of the hamlet wrapt in sleep. A faint rosy tinge was beginning to spread along the edge of the horizon, growing gradually deeper and deeper in tint, until it had the appearance of a furnace glow. The heavens seemed to be on fire, and the feathery clouds to be garnished with every celestial dye. One by one, the twinkling stars faded imperceptibly away, as if consumed with fervent heat. At length, like a floating world of molten gold, the glorious orb of day rose in majesty and beauty above the desert plain. The spires of the Escorial glittered in the brilliant sunbeams, and the mountain summits became radiant with light. The landscape appeared to smile, and as my eye glanced from earth to heaven,—from the proud monastery to the rolling sun, thoughts, too subtle for expression, darted like meteors through my soul amid the mighty and unchanging hills of Spain.

During the morning we visited the grand



chapel of the monastery. Its stern architecture is such as strongly to impress with solemnity every one who enters it. The chapel presents the form of the Grecian cross, and in its decorations is remarkable for both simplicity and elegance. It is surmounted by a noble dome, exceedingly symmetrical in its proportions, and supported by four square columns of enormous size, composed of massive blocks of granite. Its general style of architecture is the Doric, this being most in accordance with the severity and religious simplicity of a monastery. The grand altar, which is magnificent, is fronted by a flight of steps of beautiful red-veined marble. On either side, in niches constructed in the wall, are the royal families of Charles V, and Philip II, represented in figures of bronze. They are in kneeling postures, with their faces turned towards the altar.

Leaving the chapel, we next visited the *biblioteca* or library. This is a noble hall of about two hundred feet in length, thirty in width, and nearly forty in height. The floor is paved with blocks of marble of various colours, tastefully arranged in patterns, while the ceiling is painted in fresco, and elicits much

admiration, by its freshness of colouring and energy of design. The number of volumes contained in the library is between fifteen and twenty thousand. These are placed in handsome cases of carved wood, with their edges turned outwards. Besides the books, there is a considerable collection of ancient manuscripts, some of the most curious of which are generally shown to visitors ; also an excellent portrait of Philip II, as he appeared in his latter years, when, as a diseased hypochondriac and monk, he wandered through the solitary cloisters of this immense edifice, which he had himself founded, the mere phantom of what he once had been !

From the library we passed into a long suite of apartments, which, during the stay of the Court at this place, are exclusively appropriated to the use and accommodation of the royal family. Several of these chambers are furnished with an extraordinary degree of luxury and magnificence. They abound in paintings, many of them of the rarest merit. Among them is pointed out the little room which was occupied by the eccentric monarch, and where, after a protracted and painful illness, he finally rendered up his weak

and shattered spirit. Several articles which were used by the unfortunate king during his last days, were exhibited to us by our venerable guide—an old man with silver locks, but without the feeblest ray of sight. He had been born in the vicinity of the monastery, and though he had lost the use of his eyes more than forty years since, yet he guided us as skilfully through all parts of the building, as if he had been possessed of the most perfect vision, and besides described to us every object with accuracy, merely from the early impressions of his youth. To me this power seemed almost miraculous—an apt illustration of “the blind leading the blind.” Among the relics of the deceased king, which were shown to us, was a plain writing-desk, a common book-stand, and a couple of stools upon which he was accustomed to support his feet, severely afflicted with the gout. The roof of the apartment was flat and without ornament; the walls plain and of singular whiteness, and the floor composed of a rude material resembling brick. So great indeed was the self-denial of the founder of the Escorial in these matters, that he afterwards observed to one of his con-

temporaries, who accidentally alluded to the subject, "I came not to this place to be a monarch, but a monk."

It would be an endless work to give an adequate description of the wonders of the monastery. We have no idea of attempting any such thing; on the contrary, we merely allude to the objects and matters which more particularly struck our attention. Having passed through several rich apartments, ornamented with tapestry and silken hangings of various colours, we entered upon a suite of rooms, infinitely surpassing in beauty all we had seen before. These were inlaid and enamelled in the most elaborate and exquisite manner. Upon their embellishment had been employed a number of highly skilful artists, from the time of Charles IV, until the year 1831, when they were completed. In the first chamber, evidently intended as a kind of office for the King, the floor was beautifully inlaid with different woods, having a grand flower worked in the centre, garnished with vines and garlands of life-like hue. The frieze of the walls was likewise of the same species of workmanship, being adorned with flowers and other pleasing designs, and relieved

with mouldings splendidly gilt. Passing through two smaller rooms, hung with orange-coloured silk, we entered the *reclinatorio* or drawing-room, surrounded with beautiful jars, and an infinite variety of choice and curious objects. The chairs and walls were covered with white tissue, with a border of gold and green, worked in the form of a graceful arbour. This lovely apartment was, moreover, furnished with an exquisite crucifix of ivory, and four fine paintings, containing representations of sacred scenes in the history of Christ.

By the light of a dim lantern, we now descended into the "Panteon," or subterranean chamber of departed royalty. This is situated directly beneath the grand altar of the chapel ; and is approached by a flight of steps, arched with polished marble. Near the principal gateway, or entrance, are two statues of Italian workmanship. One of these figures represents "Human Nature," breathless and prostrate, with the crown fallen off from her head, and a sickle in her right hand, in the act of reaping the flowers of a cornucopia, while in her left hand she has a sceptre, with this inscription "*Natura cecidit.*" The other statue



personifies Hope, radiant with joy, and smiling, as it were in the delicious expectation of coming happiness. In her left hand she holds a torch, yielding bright and perpetual flames, while with her right she holds forth the inscription "*Exultat Spes.*"

The steps which lead directly to the consecrated vault of the dead, are thirty-four in number, and are divided into several series, by a small intervening space. The first resting place (if it may so be called) resembles a miniature chapel, sustained by four columns of marble and jasper, and having a light cupola, from the centre of which hangs a small chandelier, with six candlesticks of bronze; and on each side is a door of inlaid wood, intended, however, merely for ornament. The second "rest" is similar to the first, only that the door on the right leads into the "Sacristy," and that on the left into the "Panteon de los Infantes," or burying-place of the Royal Infants. The entrance to the sovereign chamber is ornamented with four columns, two of jasper, and two of bronze. Before these is a grated gateway, which gives admission into the *Royal Parlour of Death!* You enter, and are surprised

to find yourself in the midst of a splendid though small apartment, silent and lonely, and illumined only by the flickering lantern of the guide. Here pause, and reflect, for a moment, upon the lives of the royal sleepers around you!

The chamber is of an octagonal form, and is thirty-six feet in diameter by thirty-eight in height. It is superbly adorned with the choicest marbles and jasper, carefully polished, and beautifully decorated with mouldings of bronze and gilt. The style of architecture is an artificial or composed one, but is characterized by perfect symmetry and uniformity. The mosaic pavement represents a star, with a large flower in the centre, variegated with inlaid stones of every colour and shade. The ceiling is in the form of a dome, the arches of which are of jasper, and the intermediate spaces of black marble, with bronze mouldings running around in curves and wreaths. The key of the arch is surrounded with a circle of jasper, eighteen feet in circumference. From this is suspended a large chandelier, composed of bronze, and distinguished alike for its extreme beauty and taste. Its lower branches or arms are encircled by four livid serpents; higher up

are seen the figures of the four Evangelists ; above these are twenty-four cornucopias, separated into three distinct groups, the first of which is supported by the miniature forms of eight winged children, the second by as many angels kneeling upon the bends of the brackets, while the third group is sustained by eight female figures, disposed in a circle, with an eagle behind each of them. The whole work is surmounted by a royal crown, a globe, and a cross ; and is enriched and filled up with a multitude of heads, military trophies, mouldings, and other ornaments of a rich and tasteful character. This magnificent chandelier is only illumined when the interment of a monarch is about to take place.

Each of the octagonal sides of the "Panteon" is eight feet in width, by fifteen and a half in height. Near the entrance is a font of blood-veined jasper, constantly filled with consecrated water. On the opposite side of the chamber is an altar, of chaste design and elegant proportions. Its pedestal and table are both of black marble, with mouldings and foliages of bronze, varied in their colours. In the midst of the "frontal," is a low relief in

bronze, representing the entombment of the Saviour. Upon the table are raised two fluted columns of jasper, with the bases and heads of gilded bronze. Upon these rests the architrave, the frieze and cornice of which are of marble, with fillets and trimmings of metal, terminating in an open frontispiece, bearing in the centre the motto "*Resurrectio Nostra.*" In the space between the columns, is a symmetrical arch, within which is a splendid tablet of porphyry, serving to support a crucifix of bronze, and also a cross of black marble. This fine piece of work was executed in Rome, and added to the curiosities of the Escorial by that great national painter, Diego Velasquez. In a reserved sepulchre, standing before the altar, is a collection of precious relics, placed here by Alonzo de Guzman, patriarch of the Indies, on the day that the "Panteon" was consecrated by him, the 15th of March, 1654.

The remaining six sides of the octagon are carved and adorned in an uniform manner, and have each of them four shelves of black marble, with mouldings of bronze and a bracket of the same material at each extremity. Above

the gate are two more shelves, making in all twenty-six, upon every one of which is placed a marble sarcophagus, or sepulchral urn, containing the remains of some defunct Sovereign. The feet of these urns are in the form of lion's claws, while upon the front of each of them is a gilded plate, upon which is carved in letters of black, the name of the potentate whose ashes repose within. The number of Kings now interred in the "Panteon" is nine, among which are the remains of Charles V, and Philip II. These are all arranged upon the right of the altar. Upon the left are the Queens—eight in number. The bodies of those who died without succession, and likewise those of the Princes and Infantas, are deposited in the "Panteon de los Infantes," which is entered from the staircase, as already mentioned. The number there buried is sixty-three.

With minds full of serious thoughts we returned to our humble inn, where we refreshed ourselves with a plain meal, and then sallied out once more to pay a brief visit to the Casa del Campo, a royal cottage of the Escorial. This gem of a palace is one of the most beautiful of



the kind in Europe. Although chaste and simple in its external aspect, the furniture and ornaments of the interior are of the most rare and exquisite quality. It has many fine paintings, as well as admirable specimens of statuary. It is built of stone, while some of the halls and staircases consist of pure and highly polished marble from Italy. The gardens which surround it are laid out with taste, and form a pleasing contrast to the naked and dreary country, which seems to stretch out interminably to the east.

In the evening I again ascended the adjacent heights to take a farewell view of the magnificent monastery by moonlight. Long I gazed and ruminated upon the history of the vast and venerable pile, so calm and silent at my feet. What a marvellous monument of human skill ! It is at once a *Temple*—a *Palace*—and a *Tomb* !

## CHAPTER VI.

THE GARDENS AND FOUNTAINS OF LA GRANJA, OR SAN  
ILDEFONZO.

AT an early hour on the following morning, we took leave of the Escorial, and proceeded on horseback towards the royal *sitio* of San Ildefonso, or La Granja, as the spot is more frequently called. It is distant about eight Spanish leagues, and is reached by means of a noble highway over the mountains. Our guide through the monastery was, as we have stated, perfectly blind; and it struck me as an odd coincidence, that the muleteer who was to conduct us on our present excursion, should be quite lame. Notwithstanding this misfortune, which had been occasioned some years previous by the kick of a refractory

horse, he contrived to get over the ground at such a rapid pace, as completely to astonish us, and almost to create a conviction in our minds, that those without eyes in Spain could see better, and those without legs could walk faster, than persons having the full possession of those faculties.

No man knows what he can accomplish until he has served an apprenticeship in the severe school of necessity. It is not reasonably to be supposed, however, that our limping muleteer made as rapid progress on his feet, as we should have desired to do, with the advantage of being on horseback. He nevertheless most provokingly kept up with us every foot of the way. Our incorrigible horses seemed to have a secret understanding with their master, or sympathy for his peculiar condition, for although we bastinadoed them well, they obstinately refused to make the slightest change in their snail-like pace. As we proceeded, the scenery became more wild and interesting. The road was admirable, and wound for a time along the side of a majestic mountain, while a deep and picturesque valley lay upon our left. Rocks and pines, mingled in romantic confusion, lent a strange

charm to some portions of the journey. Overtaking a party of peasantry mounted upon mules, we joined them and journeyed on together. The animals were each heavily laden with immense and well-filled panniers, between which was generally seated, in calm satisfaction and comfort, either a man, a woman, or a child. My companion fell into such a warm disquisition with one of the pretty maids, upon some tender though exciting theme, that I gave up in despair all idea of mending our pace.

Having reached the "Puerto," or gate, as the frontier is called, we immediately descended into the province of "Old Castile." The mountains were now covered with a thick forest of firs and pines. Becoming a little apprehensive of banditti, I asked my companion suddenly, how many times he had been robbed. Judge of my surprise when he replied that this thrilling event had befallen him no less than *twenty-two times* within the last twelve years. However, he added that, as he was not accustomed (from motives of prudence) to carry much money with him, he had never consequently been plundered to any considerable amount; and (probably with the object of removing my

alarm) he furthermore stated that, as the roads in Spain, during a few years back, had been better guarded than usual, robberies had been comparatively rare.

As my companion rode on at a short distance in advance of me, his ludicrous appearance put me strongly in mind of that most faithful of squires—Sancho Panza. Before him was his round valise, with a variety of articles sticking out at each end, while behind him were his saddle-bags, one of them hanging at least a foot nearer the ground than the other. He himself sat bolt-upright upon the back of his steed, bobbing up and down in a singularly amusing manner, whenever the animal started forward upon a faster, or, to speak more correctly, a less slow pace than usual. Turning the base of a hill, we came at once in view of the cathedral, palace, and town of San Ildefonso, upon a gentle slope, at the foot of a range of towering mountains, and surrounded by waving groves and gardens of surpassing loveliness. It was a scene eminently worthy of an artist's eye. In front extended for many a mile the grassy and undulating plain, while in the immediate background, the



peak of "la Penalara," rose to the height of nearly nine thousand feet, presenting a most impressive feature in the landscape.

On arriving within the walls of the town, our first undertaking was to secure a comfortable meal; and as soon as we had dispatched this, we entered the magical precincts of the gardens. What an extraordinary change! What a delightful illusion! a fairy land seemed to be blooming around me! Indeed, the beautiful scene appeared almost a realization of the Arabian tales. Urns, statues, flower-beds, and benches of white marble were on every side, while large and splendid fountains, glittering among the trees, produced upon the senses an impression like that of a dream. Such voluptuous elegance I had only read of before—never witnessed. Tempting avenues, bordered with handsome trees, ran in every direction, while marble Naiads from amid the foliage, appeared to beckon us to come. I could not but reflect how strikingly the present lonely and deserted aspect of the gardens must contrast with their gay festivity during the summer months, when nature puts on her liveliest costume of flowers,

and the pure atmosphere is redolent with perfume and song.

Carelessly we wandered about from place to place, and from fountain to fountain. The moments flitted by like butterflies, and the soft twilight came upon us unawares. The leaves were rustling upon the ground, agitated by the cool autumnal breeze. The trees looked bare and desolate: verdure had left them, and the happy birds of summer had ceased to sing amid their branches. The spray of the fountains no longer sparkled in the air. The little water which trickled over the cascades gave forth no murmur nor sound. All was still and mournful as the grave. It seemed as if the *heart* of the paradise had stopped—as if its life and soul and melody had fled.

How different does every thing appear during the rosy months of summer in Spain. Then the pride of royalty and beauty is assembled here. The trees are drooping with foliage, and decked with fragrant blossoms. The flowers are in bloom, and the innocent birds eloquent with their sweetest songs. The fountains are alive, and the cascades foaming and dashing their

glittering spray. The shady avenues are thronged with the loveliness of one sex and the chivalry of the other. Pleasure seems here to have established her blissful reign—to have found at last an undisturbed retreat—a quiet home. But be not dazzled with the fickle glare. The Spanish heart is like the chameleon in its hues, and often seems the gayest when most sad. Ay! the calm and cordial brow may be knit in fiercest rage ere the set of sun; and the eyes of the fair maiden, so bright with apparent joy while the moon rolls in silence through the heavens, may be clouded with grief and weeping before the break of morn.

As the gardens, including even the soil, are entirely artificial, the cost of their construction was immense, amounting to nearly thirty millions of dollars. They were laid out during the reign of Philip V, to whom the idea was suggested by the sylvan enchantments of Versailles. To my taste, however, they very much surpass, both in natural and artistic effect, the proudest claims of the French elysium.

The fountains are twenty-six in number, and represent various interesting mythological subjects. One, called "La Farna," throws its

waters to the height of one hundred and thirty feet. The design is that of the winged horse Pegasus, standing in a spirited attitude upon a rock, with the goddess of liberty mounted upon him in an erect and commanding posture, and looking towards the east, as if in the act of beholding the sun. In her right hand she has a trumpet of brass, while with her left she supports the main jet of the fountain. Four figures at the feet of the goddess and the horse, personify those ferocious and malevolent beings who take pleasure in vituperating laudable actions, and are pained by the success and prosperity of the virtuous. In the pool or basin which surrounds this admirable work of art are a number of dolphins, surmounted by Cupids, which cast jets of water from their mouths and nostrils. The material of which they are composed is lead, bronzed over. Near the fountain is a beautiful parterre, bearing the same name. It is handsomely designed, and ornamented with numerous urns and statues of marble. Of the latter, two in the centre of the flowery plot embody the ancient fable of Apollo and Daphne. The nymph is about being changed into a laurel tree in order to escape the furious passion of her

ardent lover. The afflicted god afterwards consecrated this lovely tree, and it became henceforth the crown and recompense of poets.

The fountain of the "Bath of Diana," which we next visited, is probably the most unique work of the kind in the gardens. It is arranged as a frontispiece, having a solid wall of granite in the rear, rising to the height of fifty feet. In the midst is seen a little grotto, arched above, and adorned in its concavity with a profusion of marine shells. Here is revealed the form of Actæon, entirely made upon a rock, with his flute applied to his lips. Lower down are three tiers of red-streaked marble, and at proportionate distances from each other are distributed the six nymphs of the goddess Diana, who stands in the midst of them in the act of taking a bath. One of the maids seated upon the lower step, seems to be playing with a dog; another is engaged in washing the feet of the goddess; a third is dressing her luxuriant tresses, while another holds an outstretched mantle in her hands, for the purpose of concealing the naked charms of her mistress from the eyes of the hunter Actæon. The remaining nymphs are scattered in groups, and are either



sporting with dolphins or conversing among themselves. At the extremes of the principal font, are two baskets filled with the treasures of the sea. Near these are a couple of deer in reclining attitudes, with two children upon the back of each of them, frolicking with one another in all the mirthful innocence of happy childhood. The whole number of jets connected with this remarkable fountain is about thirty, one half of which are vertical and the remainder upright. The figures are painted in imitation of white marble, and present an exceedingly fine effect in contrast with the rich green of surrounding nature.

Continuing our walk, the fountain of "Latona and the Frogs" next arrested our attention. Both its design and execution elicited our warmest admiration. The large circular pool contains sixteen frogs, of enormous size and ugly aspect, looking towards the centre, where, upon an elevated rock of white marble, is seen the goddess Latona in a kneeling posture, with her left hand raised and her countenance directed towards heaven in the attitude of prayer. With her right hand she sustains one of her children, while another, who has fallen on one side, has