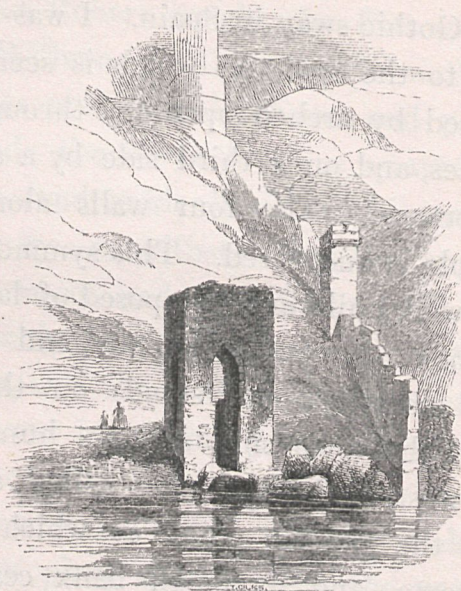


the well-known story of Florinda and her bath, so fatal to the Gothic sway in Spain. I was immediately directed to the spot, on which is seen a square tower, pierced by arched openings through its two opposite sides, and on a third side by a similar but smaller aperture. The four walls alone remain, and the whole is uncovered. This symmetrical-looking edifice, well built and composed of large stones, measures about sixteen feet square, and from forty to fifty in elevation, and stands on the edge of the river, on the town side, about a hundred yards below the western bridge—that called after Saint Martin—at the precise point at which the river quits the town, and its north bank ceases to be precipitous.

The extreme point of the termination of the high ground is immediately over the building, and is covered with the ruins of King Roderick's palace, the outer walls of which descend to the water, and are terminated by a small roundtower within a few yards of the quadrangular edifice. The edifice is called the Baño de la Cava, meaning Florinda's bath, although the native popular tradition, losing sight of the events of the history, has metamorphosed the heroine of the spot into a Moorish princess.

In fact, the rocky precipice terminates at this



FLORINDA'S BATH.

spot,—the last piece of rock forming part of the foundation of the square tower, immediately beyond which is a gently descending sand-bank most convenient and tempting to bathers. This circumstance, added to the situation of Roderick's residence, immediately above the scene, was delightfully corroborative of the tradition ; and proved sufficiently, had all investigation ceased there, the identity of the spot with the scene of the anecdote. Owing to an excess of curiosity a new discovery threw a doubt over the whole affair.

A bridge is too public a thoroughfare to allow of bathing to be practised in its immediate neighbourhood: and, in fact, the erection of the neighbouring one of St. Martin is of much later date than the events of the history in question. Fatal curiosity, however, led me to the back of the building,—the very bath of Florinda,—where it was impossible not to discover, even to conviction, that it, the square tower itself, had formerly been the entrance of a bridge. This is proved by the ruins of two piers, which appear above the water,—one near to the shore on which I was standing, the other near to the opposite bank, and both forming a line with the square tower on looking through its two opposite arches. The tower possesses other peculiarities which, compared with those belonging to the bridges actually in existence, fully confirm the supposition.

Now, although the tradition has christened the spot *Baño de la Cava*, which expression is translated “bath of the prostitute,” it is certain that Florinda was the daughter of Count Julian, governor of the Spanish possessions in Africa, and a personage of sufficient rank and influence to obtain a hearing at the court of the Arab Caliph, or at all events of his viceroy in Africa, and to conceive the idea of calling a foreign army to execute his private vengeance. It is therefore extremely improbable that

the daughter of such a person should have been seen to measure and compare the proportions of her legs with those of her companions in the immediate vicinity of a bridge, necessarily the most frequented of thoroughfares.

I confess I left the spot filled with disappointment. In vain I reflected that after all the fact is fact—that the sensual Roderick may certainly have spied from behind a window-lattice the frolics of some ladies at their bath; and that, wherever his *espionage* took place, he may for that purpose have intentionally procured himself a place of concealment, and have formed the resolution of possessing one of them. In fact, it was a matter of indifference to me whether the circumstance had occurred or not, provided I should ascertain its whereabouts, supposing it real, instead of merely discovering the spot on which it did not take place.

Having thus convicted the generally received tradition of deceit,—at least, in one of its parts,—it became an object to discover some other version of the story, which might tally in a more satisfactory manner with present existing proofs. The Arab historians deny the invasion to have been brought about by any such occurrence; but Mariana, copied by more recent writers, has either discovered or compiled a very plausible story, clear in its details,

only erroneous in respect of the heroine's name, which he makes out to be Cava. From this version the bath is entirely excluded.

According to the custom in Gothic Spain, the sons of the nobles received their education in the royal palace, and on attaining the age of manhood, they formed an escort round the sovereign on all expeditions, whether to the field or the chase. Their daughters were likewise entrusted to the care of royalty, and attended the person of the Queen, after having completed their education and instruction in the accomplishments suited to their sex, under her superintendence. When these noble damsels could number sufficient summers, their hands were bestowed according to the royal selection.

Among the attendants of Queen Egilona, was a daughter of Count Julian, possessed of extreme beauty. Florinda, while playing with her companions in a garden, situated on the banks of the Tagus, and overlooked by a tower, which contained a portion of Don Rodrigo's apartments, exposed to view, more than accorded either with etiquette or with her intention, the symmetry of her form. King Rodrigo, who, favoured by the concealment of a window-blind, had been watching the whole scene, became suddenly enamoured of her, and resolved to obtain a return of his passion; but, after finding

every effort useless, and his object unattainable, he at length employed violence.

Every circumstance of this story is corroborated, as far as is possible in the present time, by the position of the localities, the known customs of the period, and the character of King Roderick. But the historian Mariana, to show the minuteness and triumph of research, on which he has founded his relation, quotes the young lady's own version of the affair; in fact, no less interesting a document than her letter to her father, then in Africa, disclosing the insult offered to the family. The following is the translation of this portentous dispatch. A *billet-doux* pregnant with greater events never issued from the boudoir of beauty and innocence.

“Would to Heaven, my lord and father!—Would to Heaven the earth had closed over me, before it fell to my lot to write these lines, and with such grievous news to cause you sadness and perpetual regret! How many are the tears that flow while I am writing, these blots and erasures are witnesses. And yet if I do not immediately, I shall cause a suspicion that not only the body has been polluted, but the soul likewise blotted and stained with perpetual infamy. Would I could foresee a term to our misery!—Who but yourself shall find a remedy for our misfortunes? Shall we delay, until time

brings to light that which is now a secret, and the affront we have received entail on us a shame more intolerable than death itself? I blush to write that which I am bound to divulge. O wretched and miserable fate! In a word, your daughter—your blood, that of the kingly line of the Goths, has suffered from King Rodrigo,—to whose care, alas! she was entrusted like the sheep to the wolf,—a most wicked and cruel affront. It is for you, if you are worthy the name of a man, to cause the sweet draught of our ruin to become a deadly poison to his life; nor to leave unpunished the mockery and insult he has cast on our line and on our house.”

Don Julian, who, as some say, was of royal descent, and a relative, not far removed, of Roderick—was possessed of qualities no less marked by daring than artifice. His plans well digested, he committed his government in Africa to the charge of a deputy, and repaired to the court at Toledo. There he made it his business to advance in credit and favour until the moment should arrive for action. His first step was, by means of false alarms of attacks meditated on the northern frontier, to get rid of the principal part of the disposable forces in that direction. Meanwhile he caused a letter from his Countess, who remained in Africa, to be forwarded to the King, in which, on the plea of serious illness, she urgently

entreats the royal permission for the departure of Florinda to Ceuta. It is related that the profligate Rodrigo consented to the journey with so much the better grace, that possession had divested the attractions of his victim of all further hold of his passions, already under the dominion of new allurements.

There is a gate at Malaga, giving issue towards the sea-shore, which bears to this day the name of Gate of the Cava: through it she is said to have passed on embarking for Africa.

With regard to the name "la Cava" given to the gate and to the bath, I am disposed to prefer the popular notion to the assertion of Mariana, that it was her name. It is a natural supposition that the anecdote of the affair of Toledo, spread among the Arabs, who, for centuries after this period, were the depositaries of the annals and traditions of the Peninsula,—should have become tinted with a colour derived from their customs and ideas. Now it would be difficult to persuade an Arab that the circumstances of the story in question could befall a virtuous female, surrounded with the thousand precautions peculiar to an oriental court. If we add to this the contemptuous tone assumed by them towards those of the hostile creed—a tone that must have suited in an especial degree with their way of thinking on the subject of female deportment among the

Christians, which they look upon as totally devoid of delicacy and reserve—the epithet applied to Florinda is easily accounted for. But to return to the story.

It only now remained for Don Julian to determine the Caliph's viceroy in Africa in favour of the invasion. Repairing to his court, he obtained an audience, in which he painted to the Prince, in such eloquent terms, the natural and artificial wealth of the Spanish peninsula, the facility of the enterprise, owing to the absence of the principal part of the disposable hostile force, and the unpopularity of King Rodrigo, that an expedition was immediately ordered; which, although at first prudently limited to a small troop under Tharig, led to the conquest, in a few campaigns, of the whole Peninsula.

Mingled with the ruins of Roderick's palace are seen at present those of the monastery of Saint Augustin, subsequently erected on the same site: but on the side facing the river, the ancient wall and turrets, almost confounded with the rock, on which they were built, have outlived the more recent erections, or perhaps have not been interfered with by them. Immediately beyond the portion of these walls, beneath which is seen the Baño de la Cava, they turn, together with the brink of the precipice, abruptly to the north, forming a right

angle with the river bank : this part faces the western *vega* or valley, and looks down on the site of the ancient palace gardens, which occupied the first low ground. They extended as far as the chapel of Santa Leocadia. The ground is now traversed by the road to the celebrated sword-blade manufactory, situated on the bank of the river, half a mile lower down. With the exception of the inmates of that establishment, the only human beings who frequent the spot are the votaries on their way to the shrine of Santa Leocadia, and the convicts of a neighbouring *Presidio* in search of water from the river.

LETTER IX.

CATHEDRAL OF TOLEDO.

Toledo.

EVERY successive æra of civilization, with the concomitant religion on which it has been founded, and from which it has taken its peculiar mould, has, after maintaining its ground with more or less lustre, and throughout a greater or smaller duration, arrived at its inevitable period of decline and overthrow.

In ceasing, however, to live, and to fill society far and wide with its enlightening influence,—in exchanging its erect attitude for the prostrate one consequent on its fall,—seldom has a creed, which has long held possession of the most enlightened intellects of our race for the time being, undergone an entire extinction, so as to disappear altogether from the face of the earth, and leave no trace of its existence. The influence of the soil, formation, and climate of the region, in the bosom of which such

civilization has had its birth, on the dispositions and faculties of the race which has become its depository, has always set its peculiar mark on its monuments, whether civil, military, or religious, but especially the last; which monuments, surviving the reign of the power to which they owe their existence, prolong and sanctify its memory, while they stand, erect and silent, over its grave; and furnish valuable information and benefit to those future generations sufficiently enlightened to consult them.

If this theory of successions and vicissitudes be consonant (which probably no one will deny) with the march of events on the surface of this our planet, then do the circumstances of the present situation invest, as far as regards Spain, those relics of human genius and human enthusiasm, the venerable temples of her declining faith, with an interest beyond that which they have possessed at any period since their foundation. It is impossible to have paid any attention to the events of the last few years, without having received the conviction that the reign of Christianity is here fast approaching,—not the commencement, but the termination of its decline. Spaniards will never do things by halves; and will probably prefer the entire overthrow of ancient customs to the system pursued in France, of propping up, by government

enactments and salaries, a tottering edifice of external forms, long since divested of its foundation of public belief.

To speak correctly, the decline of religious supremacy in Spain is by no means recent. It was coeval with that of the arts, and of the political grandeur of the country. The gradual cessation of the vast gifts and endowments for the erection of the religious establishments was a symptom of devotional enthusiasm having passed its zenith. Had not this occurred nearly three centuries back, Madrid would not have wanted a Cathedral. Nothing could ever have tended more directly to compromise the durability of Christianity in Spain, than the final expulsion or extermination of the Moors and Jews. Had Torquemada and a few others possessed heads as clear and calculating as their hearts were resolute and inexorable—a knowledge of human nature as profound as their ambition of divine honours was exalted, they would have taken care not entirely to deprive the Church of food for its passions and energies. They would not have devoured all their heretics at a single meal, but would have exercised more *ménagement* and less voracity. They would have foreseen that by burning a few hundred Jews and Arabs less each year, nourishment would remain to animate the declamations of preachers, and the ener-

gies of the faithful; without which the fatal effects of sloth and indifference must inevitably take root in the imaginations, and eventually undermine their lofty fabric.

The decline was, however, so gradual as to exercise no perceptible influence on the general conduct of the population, by whom forms were still observed, churches filled, and acts of devotion unceasingly accomplished. A variety of causes (into a description of which it is not my object, nor would it be your wish, that I should enter, but of which one of the most influential has been the importation of foreign ideas—as well through natural channels, as by special and interested exertions) has precipitated the *dénouement* of this long-commenced revolution; and that with so headlong a rapidity, that, in that Spain which surpassed all other nations in bigoted attachment to religious rites, the confiscation of all the possessions of the Church, under a promise (not to be performed) of salaries for a certain number of ecclesiastics, insufficient for the continuation of the ancient ceremonies, is received by the population with indifference! The Cathedral of Toledo, deprived of the greater number of its functionaries,—including its archbishop and fifty-six of its sixty canons, and no longer possessing, out of an income of hundreds of thousands sterling, a trea-