

Spaniards in general, and are more deserving of notice in a summary of the national characteristic qualities. It is impossible, for instance, not to be struck by the intelligence and tact, independent of cultivation, which pervade all classes. Whether the denizens of these southern climes are indebted to the purity of their atmosphere, for this gift of rapid perception, in which they surpass our northern organizations, or to whatever cause they may owe it; the fact leads to involuntary speculation on what might have been the results, in a country so distinguished, besides, by its natural advantages, had the Arab supremacy lasted until our days. At a period when education was generally held in no estimation in Europe, the first care of almost every sovereign of that race was usually directed to the establishment, or improvement, of the public schools, in which the sciences and languages were taught at the royal expense. No town being unprovided with its schools, it is difficult to imagine to what degree of superiority over the rest of Europe the continuation of such a system would have raised a people so gifted as to be capable of supplying, by natural intelligence, the almost universal absence of information and culture.

You continually meet with such instances of uncultivated intelligence as the following. I was occu-

pied in sketching in a retired part of the environs of Madrid, when a ragged, half-naked boy, not more than ten or eleven years of age, and employed in watching sheep, having to pass near me, stopped to examine my work. He remained for nearly a quarter of an hour perfectly still, making no movement except that of his eyes, which continually travelled from the paper to the landscape, and back from that to the paper. At length, going away, he exclaimed, "Que paciencia, Dios mio!"

The following is an example of the absence of cultivation, where it might have been expected to exist. A student leaving the university of Toledo, at the age of twenty-seven, told me he had studied there eleven years, and had that day received his diploma of barrister, which, when sent to Madrid, where it would be backed by the sanction of the minister, would authorise him to practise his profession in any town throughout Spain. In the course of the same conversation, he asked me whether Russia was not situated in the Mediterranean, and whether England did not form a portion of that country.

Tact and good manners are so universal among the lower classes, that a more familiar intercourse than we are accustomed to, can be allowed between persons of different ranks. Those of the highest class are seen, during a journey, dining at the same

table with their servants; and on all other occasions entering into conversation with them. This intercourse of good nature and good understanding, universally existing between superiors and inferiors, and which is never known to degenerate into familiarity, would preserve Spain a long time from revolutions of a popular origin—were she left to herself. The Spaniard of the lowest station has as considerable an idea of his personal consequence as a marquis, and maintains with his equals all the forms of high breeding. If you stop to listen to the discussions of a knot of ragged children playing at marbles, you will hear them address each other by the title of Señor.

The urbanity and polish which prevails throughout all classes is genuine, and the result of good-nature. This is proved by their readiness to render all sorts of services as soon as they are acquainted with you, and even before; and *that* notwithstanding their suspicion and dislike of strangers, a disposition for which they have ample cause. I don't mean to include services which might incur pecuniary outlay; it would be something like requesting the loan of the Highlander's inexpressibles. Although even of this a remarkable instance has fallen under my observation,—the capability existing,—but they will spare no trouble nor time: doubling the

value of the obligation by the graceful and earnest manner of rendering it.

Should your reception by a Spaniard be marked by coldness, it is generally to be accounted for by a very excusable feeling. The Spaniard is usually deeply preoccupied by the unfortunate state of his country. This subject of continual reflection operating on a character singularly proud, but which is at the same time marked by a large share of modesty,—qualities by no means incompatible,—occasions him a sensation when in presence of a foreigner nearly approaching to suffering. He feels a profound veneration for the former glories of his land, and admiration of its natural superiority; but he is distrustful of his modern compatriots, of whom he has no great opinion. His anxiety is, therefore, extreme with regard to the judgment which a Frenchman or Englishman may have formed respecting his countrymen and country: and he is not at his ease until satisfied on that point; fearing that the backward state of material civilization may be attributed by them to hopeless defects in the national character, and diminish their respect for his country. He is restored to immediate peace of mind by a delicate compliment, easily introduced, on the ancient grandeur of Spain, or the eternal splendour of her skies and soil, and especially by an expression of disapproval of the

influence which foreign governments seem desirous of arrogating to themselves over her political destinies.

Should the stranger delay the application of some such soothing balm, he will not hesitate to provoke it, by ingeniously leading the conversation in the direction he wishes, and then heaping abuse and censure on his compatriots.

The interference of foreign governments in their politics is, in fact, one of the consequences of the present national inferiority, the most galling to their feelings. This is accounted for by the high independence, which is one of the principal features of their character, and is observable in the most insignificant events of their daily life. The practice which prevails in some countries, of meddling each with his (and even *her*) neighbour's concerns, and of heaping vituperation where a man's conduct or opinions differ from his who speaks, is one of the most repugnant to the Spanish nature. If a Spaniard hears such a conversation, he stares vacantly, as though he comprehended nothing; and the natural expression traceable on not a few countenances and attitudes may be translated, "I don't interfere in your affairs, pray don't trouble yourself about mine."

It is curious to trace this in their favourite sayings, or proverbs (*refrans*), by which the national pecu-

liarities of character are admirably depicted. Of these no people possess so complete a collection. The following is one which expresses the feeling to which I allude :

El Marques de Santa Cruz hizó
Un palacio en el Viso :
Porque pudo, y porque quisó.

or, translated,

What could induce Sir Santa Cruz to
Build a house the Viso close to ?
—He had the money, and he chose to.

I place, in the translation, the edifice close to the Viso, instead of upon it, as in the original text. I doubt whether any apology is necessary for this poetical licence, by which the intention of the proverb undergoes no alteration. It is true, a house may be close to a hill without being erected upon it; but if, as in this instance, it is on the top of the hill, it is most certainly close to it likewise.

The submission of the Spaniards to the despotism of etiquette and custom in trifles, does not (otherwise than apparently) constitute a contradiction to this independence of character. However that may be, the breach of all other laws meets with easier pardon, than that of the laws of custom. This code is made up of an infinity of minute observances, many of which escape the notice of a foreigner, until

accustomed by degrees to the manners of those who surround him. He will not, for instance, discover, until he has made himself some few temporary enemies, that no greater insult can be offered to a person of rank, or in authority, than saluting him in a cloak *embozado*—the extremity thrown over the shoulder.—A similar neglect is not pardoned either by the fair sex. The minutest peculiarities in dress are observed, and if at all discordant with the received mode of the day, incur universal blame. The situation of a stranger is, in fact, at first scarcely agreeable in a country in which the smallest divergence from established customs attracts general attention and criticism. This does not, however, interfere with the ready good-nature and disposition to oblige met with, as I said before, on all occasions.

In some instances the attachment to external forms operates advantageously. Such is that of the picturesque practice prevailing in many of the provinces, of assuming the quality of the *Beata*. In Toledo, certain peculiarities in the toilette of one of a group of young ladies attracted my curiosity. She was apparently about seventeen ; pretty, but by no means remarkably so for a Spaniard, and appeared to be in deep mourning. Whenever, in speaking, a movement of her right hand and arm lifted up her mantilla, a japanned leather sash was exposed to

view, of about two inches in width, an end of which hanging from the right side, reached rather lower than the knee. On the right sleeve, half-way between the shoulder and the elbow, was fixed a small silver plate, called an *escudo*, and a rosary was worn round her neck.

I was informed, on inquiry, that she was *una beata*; and being still in the dark, my informant related her story. He commenced by the inquiry, whether I had heard of a young man being drowned four months previously in the Tagus. I replied that I had heard of thirty or forty; for he referred to the bathing season, during which, as the river is sown with pits and precipices, and unprovided with humane societies, accidents occur every day. He then named the victim, of whose death I had in fact heard. He was a youth of the age of twenty, and the *novio* (intended) of the young lady in black. On hearing suddenly, and without preparation, the fatal news, she had been seized with a profuse vomiting of blood, and had continued dangerously ill during several weeks. She was now convalescent, and had made her appearance in society for the first time.

My informant added, on my repeating the inquiry respecting the costume, that it is the custom for a young lady, on recovering from a serious illness, to offer herself to the *Virgen de los dolores*; the

external sign of the vow consisting in the adoption of a dress similar to that worn by the Virgin in the churches. The obligation assumed lasts generally during a year; although some retain the dress for the remainder of their life. Examples are known of this practice among the other sex; in which case the costume is that of a Franciscan friar; but the *beato* becomes the object of ridicule.

Among the forms of society to which especial importance is attached are the ceremonies and duration of mourning for relations. The friends of the nearest relative,—especially if a lady,—of a person newly deceased, assemble day after day for a considerable time in her house. All are in full dress of deep mourning; and the victim of sorrow and society is expected to maintain a continual outpouring of sighs and tears, while she listens to each consoler in turn. Much importance is attached to the display of the usual appearances of grief, even when the circumstances of the case do not necessarily call for it. Happening to enter a house in which news had been received of the death of a relative, who resided in another part of Spain, I found the lady of the house discussing with a friend the form of her new mourning dress.

Struck by the melancholy expression of her countenance, and the redness of her eyes, I inquired

whether any bad news had been received. My question gave rise to a renewed flood of tears; "Yes, yes," was the reply; "I have had terrible news; my poor uncle, who had been afflicted for years with dropsy, died only six days ago." I expressed my sincere regret at so sad an event, while she continued her explanations to the other lady. "I understand," she said, in a voice almost suffocated, "that this sleeve is no longer to be—drawn in; and the—front, according to the last—French—fashion,—is at least an inch—shorter." Taking the opportunity of the first moment of silence, I asked for some further details respecting this beloved uncle. "It was your Señora mother's brother, I believe?" "No, no, the husband of my aunt: and what—do you—think of the—mantilla?" After the reply of the other visitor to the latter question, I continued,—“But your profound regret, on occasion of the loss of so amiable a companion, is natural.” “Terrible, sir, yes—my poor uncle!” “Had you seen him shortly before the sad event?” “Alas! no, sir, I never—saw him but—once in my life; and—should not now have recognized him—for I—was then—only five years old.”

The Spaniards are not a dinner-giving nation; obedient, as some suppose, to their proverb,—which although the effect, may also operate as a cause,—namely, ‘Feasts are given by fools, and partaken of

“by wise men.” This proverb, however, paints the national character with less fidelity than most others; the parsimonious selfishness it implies is not Spanish. Sufficient reasons exist to account for the rarity of dinner invitations.

Although the English are not responsible for the geniality of climate, which corks up their crystallized souls to be enclosed fog-tight, until released by a symbolical ceremony of the popping of champagne corks,—it is not the less true that dinners are their only introductions to acquaintanceship. Spaniards have corks also, and well worth the trouble of drawing, as well as all the other *materiel* of conviviality; but they despise it, finding the expansion operated by their sunshine more complete and less laborious. Their sociability no more requires dinner parties than their aloes hedges do steam-pipes. With the exception of their ungovernable passion for cold water, their sobriety is extreme; and this may perhaps unite with a dislike to social ostentation in resisting the exotic fashion of dinners. But bring a good letter of introduction to a Spaniard, and you will find a daily place at a well-supplied table, the frequent occupation of which will give unmistakable pleasure.

In such case you are looked for as a daily visitor; not ceremoniously, but as using the house when in

want of a more cheerful home than your *posada*. Æolus has not yet been appointed here the arbiter of smiles,* and your entrance is always the signal for the same animated welcome. The only variation will be a good-natured remonstrance, should your visits have undergone any interruption.

To return to my route. Aware of the inconvenience of Spanish inland travelling, and with Seville for my object, I proceeded to Lyon. Nor had I long to wait for the reward attendant on my choice of route. Getting on board the steam-packet at six o'clock on an autumn morning, I experienced at first some discouragement, from the fog, which I had not reflected was the natural—or rather unnatural—atmosphere of that most discouraging of all places, a prosperous manufacturing town. No sooner, however, had we escaped, by the aid of high-pressure steam, from these deleterious influences, than our way gradually opened before us, rather dimly at first, but more and more clear as the sun attained height: the banks of the Rhone having, during this time, been progressing also in elevation and grandeur, by eight o'clock we were enjoying a rapidly moving panorama of superb scenery.

This day's journey turned out unusually auspicious.

* "Who does a kindness is not therefore kind.—
Perhaps the wind has shifted from the East."—POPE.

cious. Owing to some favourable combination of celestial influences, (although I perceived no one on board likely to have an astrologer in his pay,) no untoward accident—so common on this line—befell us. No stoppages—no running down of barges, nor running foul of bridges—nor bursting of engines. The stream was neither too shallow, nor too full, so that we were preserved both from running aground, and from being run away with. Our boat was the fastest of the six which started at the same time; and one is never ill-disposed by a speed of eighteen miles an hour, although it may be acquired at an imminent risk of explosion.

There is many a day's journey of equal or greater beauty than the descent of the Rhone; but I know of none which operates a more singular effect on the senses. It is that of being transported by a leap from the north to the south of Europe. The Rhone valley, in fine weather, enjoys a southern climate, while all the region to the north of Lyon is marked by the characteristics of the more northern provinces. That town itself, with its smoke, its gloom, and its dirt, maintains itself at the latitude of Manchester; whose excellent money-making inhabitants, if thrown in the way of a party of Lyonnais, would scarcely feel themselves among strangers, so complete would be the similarity of habits and man-

ners. The transition, therefore, to those wafted down the sunny valley of the Rhone, is as theatrical as the scenery itself, but with the agreeable addition of reality. Every surrounding object contributes to the magic of the change. Taking leave of a bare and treeless country, and its consequently rough and ungenial climate, which, in its turn, will necessarily exercise its influence on the character of the population, you find yourself gliding between vine-clad mountains, not black and rugged like those of the Rhine, but soft and rosy, and lighted by a sky, which begins here to assume a southern brilliancy. The influence of the lighter atmosphere first begins to be felt, expanding the organs, and filling the frame with a sensation, unknown to more northern climes, of pleasure derived from mere existence. Then the language you hear on all sides is new and musical; for the crew of the steamer is Provençal, and their *patois* falls on the ear with something approaching the soft accent of Italy; while their expressive eyes, sunburnt faces, and a certain mixture of animation and languor—the exact counterpart of the phlegmatic industry of the north, complete the scene, with which they are in perfect harmony.

A propos of harmony, when the sailors' dinner hour arrived, they were summoned by an air of