

throughout Spain : showing what tremendous power may be wielded by a single human hand, when applied to the task of undoing. That King, by a single signature, accomplished an act which may be considered as equivalent to retarding, by several centuries, the civilization of a great country,—perhaps, even, to cutting it off from the only opportunity it was destined to possess, during the present ages, of arriving at the summit which the more privileged nations are permitted to attain ; while it influenced injuriously the progress of letters, science, and art throughout Europe. But we will no longer allow digressions to delay our visit to the Alcazar, where we shall find visible proof of Arab superiority, at least, in architectural science and invention.

Passing to the east of the cathedral through the large open space, on the left of which is the Archbishop's palace, and on the right the cathedral and exchange, the embattled outer walls of the Alcazar stop the view in front ; varied here and there with square towers, and containing in the centre an arched entrance. The present buildings occupy the south-eastern corner of the ancient enclosure of the royal residence, which comprised all the remaining space as far as the banks of the river, passing round the south side of the cathedral, and, in fact, including it in its precincts—an enclosure of about a mile





FAÇADE OF THE ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.

and a half in circumference. An old tower, or scrap of wall, indicates here and there the position of the ancient buildings, the site of which is now occupied by two or three *plazuelas*, or squares, and several streets communicating between them. The present palace scarcely covers a third of the original extent.

Having passed through the first entrance, you are in a large square, surrounded with buildings without ornament, and used at present as government offices. At the opposite side another archway passes under the buildings, and leads to a second large court. This communicates on the left with one or two others; one of these is rather ornamental, and in the Italian style, surrounded by an arcade supported on double columns, and enclosing a garden sunk considerably below the level of the ground. This court is approached by a covered passage, leading, as already mentioned, from the left side of the second large square, the south side of which—the side opposite to that on which we entered—consists of the façade and portal of the inner palace of all;—the Arab ornamental portion, the residence of the royal person.

At the right-hand extremity of this front is the entrance to the first floor, approached by a staircase, which occupies part of the building on that side of the square, and which contains the apartments of

the governor. The staircase is open to the air, and is visible through a light arcade. The centre portal of this façade is ornamented, from the ground to the roof, with rich tracery, varied by a band of blue and white *azulejos*, and terminating in an advancing roof of carved cedar. Right and left, the rest of the front consists of a plain wall up to the first floor, on which small arcades, of a graceful design, enclose retreating balconies and windows.

Entering through the centre door, a magnificent apartment has been annihilated by two white partitions, rising from the ground to the ceiling, and dividing it into three portions, the centre one forming the passage which leads from the entrance to the principal court. Several of the apartments are thus injured, owing to the palace being occasionally used as a temporary lodging for the court. Passing across the degraded hall, a magnificent embroidered arch—for the carving with which it is covered more resembles embroidery than any other ornament—gives access to the great court.

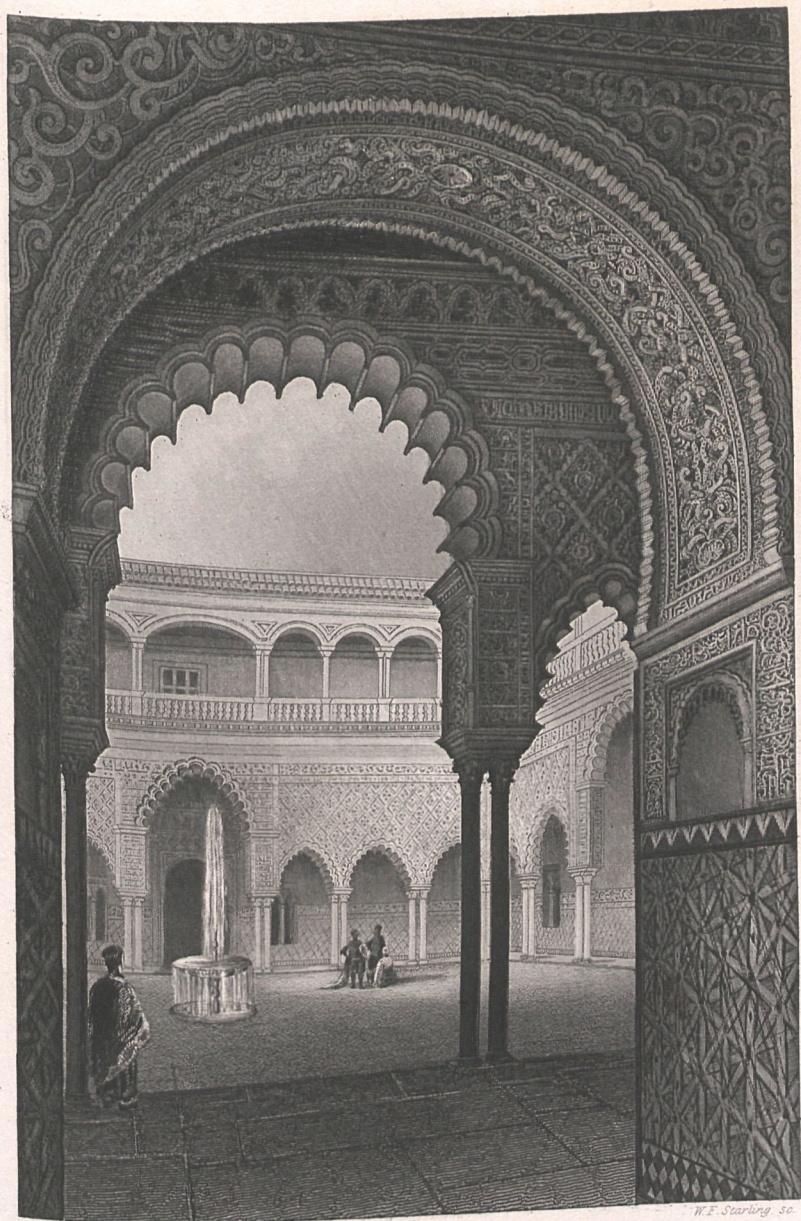
It is difficult to ascertain what portion of this palace belongs to the residence of the Moorish Kings, as Pedro the Cruel had a considerable portion of it rebuilt by Moorish architects in the same style. The still more recent additions are easily distinguished. One of them, in this part of the edifice,

is a gallery, erected by Charles the Fifth, over the arcades of the great court. This gallery one would imagine to have been there placed with a view to demonstrate the superiority of Arab art over every other. It is conceived in the most elegant Italian style, and executed in white marble; but, compared with the fairy arcades which support it, it is clumsiness itself. The court is paved with white marble slabs, and contains in the centre a small basin of the same material, of chaste and simple form, once a fountain. The arcades are supported on pairs of columns, measuring about twelve diameters in height, and of equal diameter throughout. The capitals are in imitation of the Corinthian. The entire walls, over and round the arches, are covered with deep tracery in stucco; the design of which consists of diamond-shaped compartments, formed by lines descending from the cornice, and intersecting each other diagonally. These are indented in small curves, four to each side of the diamond. In each centre is a shell, surrounded by fanciful ornaments. The same design is repeated on the inside of the walls, that is, under the arcade, but only on the outer wall; and this portion of the court is covered with a richly-ornamented ceiling of Alerce, in the manner called *artesonado*.

On the opposite side of the court to that on which

we entered, another semicircular arch, of equal richness, leads to a room extending the whole length of the court, and similar in form to that situated at the entrance, possessing also an ornamental ceiling, but plainer walls. The left and right sides of the court are shorter than the others. In the centre of the left side, a deep alcove is formed in the wall, probably occupied in former times by a sofa or throne: at present it is empty, with the exception, in one corner, of a dusty collection of *azulejos* fallen from the walls, and exposing to temptation the itching palms of enthusiasts. At the opposite end a large arch, admirably carved, and containing some superb old cedar doors, leads to the Hall of Ambassadors. This apartment is a square of about thirty-three feet, by nearly sixty in height. It is also called the *media naranja* (half-orange), from the form of its ceiling.

In the centre of each side is an entrance, that from the court consists of the arch just mentioned, forming a semicircle with the extremities prolonged in a parallel direction. Those of the three other sides are each composed of three arches of the horse-shoe form, or three-quarters of a circle, and supported by two columns of rare marbles and jasper surmounted by gilded capitals. The walls are entirely covered with elegant designs, executed in

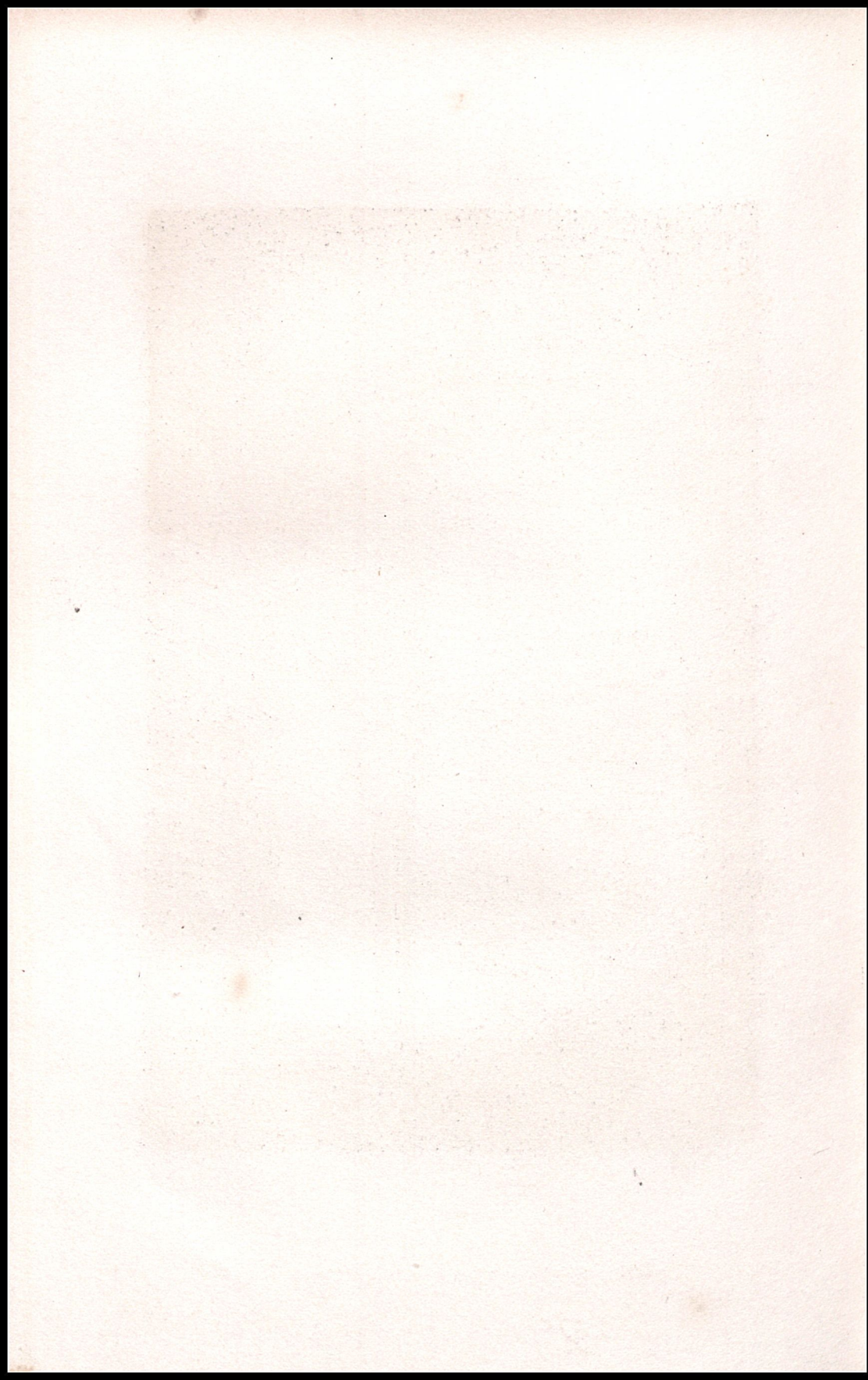


*N. A. Wells del.*

*W. E. Starling sc.*

GREAT COURT OF THE ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.



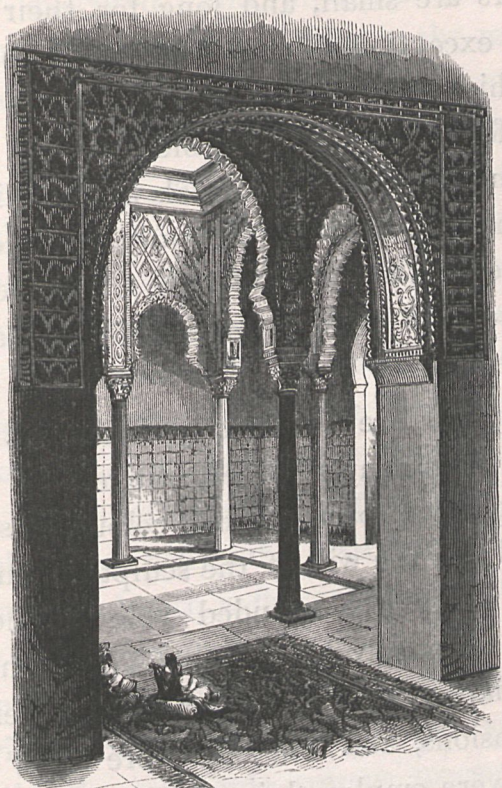


stucco, the effect of which suffers from a series of small arches, running round the upper part of the room, having been deprived of their tracery to make room for the painted heads (more or less resembling) of the kings of Spain, Goths and their successors, excepting the Arabs and Moors. This degradation is, however, forgotten from the moment the eye is directed to the ceiling.

In the Arab architecture, the ornament usually becomes more choice, as it occupies a higher elevation; and the richest and most exquisite labours of the artist are lavished on the ceilings. The designs are complicated geometrical problems, by means of which the decorators of that nation of mathematicians and artists attained to a perfection of ornament unapproached by any other style. From the cornice of this room rise clusters of diminutive gilded semi-cupolas, commencing by a single one, upon which two are supported, and multiplying so rapidly as they rise, some advancing, others retreating, and each resting on a shoulder of one below, that, by the time they reach the edge of the great cupola, they appear to be countless. The ornament of this dome consists of innumerable gilt projecting bands, of about two inches in width; these intersect each other in an infinite profusion of curves, as they stretch over the hemispherical space. The artist,

who would make a pencil sketch of this ceiling, should be as deep a geometrician as the architect who designed it.

On quitting the Hall of Ambassadors, we arrive at the best part of the building. Passing through the arcade at the right-hand side, a long narrow apartment is crossed, which opens on a small court called the Court of Dolls (Patio de los Muceñas). No description, no painting can do justice to this exquisite little enclosure. You stand still, gazing round until your delight changes into astonishment at such an effect being produced by immoveable walls and a few columns. A space, of about twenty feet by thirty,—in which ten small pillars, placed at corresponding but unequal distances, enclose a smaller quadrangle, and support, over a series of different sized arches, the upper walls,—has furnished materials to the artist for the attainment of one of the most successful results in architecture. The Alhambra has nothing equal to it. Its two large courts surpass, no doubt, in beauty the principal court of this palace; but, as a whole, this residence, principally from its being in better preservation and containing more, is superior to that of Granada, always excepting the advantage derived from the picturesque site of the latter. The Court of Dolls, at all events, is unrivalled.



COURT OF DOLLS, ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.\*

The architect made here a highly judicious use of some of the best gleanings from Italice, consisting of a few antique capitals, which, being separated from their shafts, have been provided with others, neither made for them, nor even fitted to them.

\* Feeling his powers as a draughtsman inadequate to do justice to this court, the author has inserted the above sketch merely to show the general architectural design.

The pillars are small, and long for their diameter, with the exception of the four which occupy the angles, which are thicker and all white. The rest are of different coloured marbles, and all are about six feet in height. The capitals are of still smaller proportions; so that at the junction they do not cover the entire top of the shaft. This defect, from what cause it is difficult to explain, appears to add to their beauty.

The capitals are exquisitely beautiful. One in particular, apparently Greek, tinged by antiquity with a slight approach to rose colour, is shaped, as if carelessly, at the will of the sculptor; and derives from its irregularly rounded volutes and uneven leaves, an inconceivable grace. The arches are of various shapes, that is, of three different shapes and dimensions, and whether more care, or better materials were employed in the tracery of the walls in this court, or for whatever other reason, it is in better preservation than the other parts of the palace. It has the appearance of having been newly executed in hard white stone.

Through the Court of Dolls you pass into an inner apartment, to which it is a worthy introduction. This room has been selected in modern times, as being the best in the palace, for the experiment of restoring the ceiling. The operation has been

judiciously executed, and produces an admirable effect. The design of this ceiling is the most tasteful of the whole collection. Six or seven stars placed at equal distances from each other, form centres, from which, following the direction of the sides of their acute angles, depart as many lines; that is, two from each point; or, supposing the star to have twelve points—twenty-four from each star: but these lines soon change their directions, and intersecting each other repeatedly, form innumerable small inclosures of an hexagonal shape. The lines are gilt. Each hexagonal compartment rises in relief of about an inch and a half from the surface, and is ornamented with a flower, painted in brilliant colours on a dark ground.

The room is twenty-four feet in height by only sixteen wide, and between sixty and seventy in length. At the two ends, square spaces are separated from the centre portion by a wall, advancing about two feet from each side, and supporting an arch, extending across the entire width. These arches were probably furnished with curtains, which separated at will the two ends from the principal apartment, and converted them into sleeping retreats. Their ornaments are still more choice than those of the centre. With the exception of this room, all the principal apartments, and the two courts, are