their offices of nearly the whole *personnel* of their respective administrations—fifty-four being expelled from the Home Office alone, as if to scatter the seeds of a new Revolution. Integrity, capacity, experience were nothing, compared with the paramount object of a provision for hungry retainers; public affairs were subjected to the torture of a training of tyros, and legions of the disaffected sent abroad to infect the community. Sixteen of the highest judges in Madrid and the Provinces were removed, and the bench was packed with partisans; the Finances were entrusted to the keeping of eighteen new individuals, associates of ministerial purity; and the logic of the bayonet was strengthened by the introduction of a number of Carlist officers to posts of confidence in the army.

Even the lists of Bravo and his colleagues were not deemed sufficiently decided; and when ministers presented them to the Queen, they were set aside for other appointments with which Narvaez had previously supplied her. The Iron Dictator's imperious will extended even to such minute regulation as obnoxious names of streets; and when on the same last day of the year, Mr. Bulwer, the new British Envoy, arrived in Madrid, and drove to the Embassy, he found the name of the street in which it is situated, changed from the Calle del Duque de la Victoria, to the Calle de Alcala!

CHAPTER XX.

BARCELONA.—A SPANISH ARMS-BILL.—FIGUERAS.

NEVER was there a more melancholy prospect than that presented by Barcelona, when the capitulation was signed and ratified in November, and the gates thrown open to the population of Spain. To whatever side the eye was turned in the leading streets of this ancient capital, no sight could be obtained but of houses entirely or partially destroyed, churches and public edifices riddled with cannon-ball, roofs thrown off and walls struck down by the destructive explosion of shells and grenades. In the streets barricades were thrown up in every direction,—not slight and flimsy structures such as were hitherto known in the partisan warfare of cities, but substantial erections, constructed of solid masonry in stone and lime—a new and original device, suggested by the sad exigencies of Spanish domestic strife.

It was on the central and more elegant quarter of the town that the madness of factious violence was especially vented; and the rage of contending citizens burst over their most precious monuments. The Plaza San Jaime, where the Patulea had planted a battery and the Junta of Defence held its sittings, was entirely laid desolate, the Fortress of Montjuich having made this quarter the special aim of its shot and shell; and the splendid Plaza del Palacio, the

most brilliant cluster of houses in the city, and a model of street architecture, was in many parts irreparably damaged, in some entirely destroyed. The Exchange, a fine building, was greatly injured, having been struck by 400 cannon balls; and the unusual strength of the structure, which was composed throughout of stone, alone preserved it from being laid in ruins; while the handsome palace of the Captain-General of Catalonia, in the same quarter, was defaced with shot, and ready to crumble to the ground.

In every direction were seen the traces of successive batteries thrown up by the Junta of Defence, and vigorously bombarded from the citadel, till its occupants succeeded in effecting their destruction, and every fresh barricade erected to frustrate probable charges of cavalry was the signal and aim of a heavy cannonade. Before the final surrender, 8000 shot and shell were fired into the city—the *third* bombardment which Barcelona had suffered within twelve months—and in this last attack by the merciful Narvaez, it sustained eight times the number of projectiles which Espartero was so taxed with inhumanity for discharging against it in the previous December.

It was by the Calle de San Pedro that the Captain-General of Catalonia entered Barcelona on the 20th of November, at the head of his troops. The street was thronged with people, and immense was the enthusiasm which the close of this terrible two months' siege excited. Tears stood in every eye, and flowed from most. Hundreds of women were in ecstacies of delight, and some fainted from excess of joy. The

privations of these innocent sufferers, many of whom were exposed at Gracia to the inclemencies of an early winter without a cloak or a blanket, were truly horrible, and the sudden change of feeling was enough to drive them to the verge of madness. Many burst into frantic demonstrations, clung to Sanz's officers, and kissed them! Tears were no longer strangers even to the rough eyes of soldiers, and men wept like children. When the General rode up surrounded by his staff, there were loud *vivas* for the Queen and the army, and a general *palmoteo* or clapping of hands. The very Jamancia, who had held out so long, seemed not displeased with the change, and looked on with approving eyes. The entire city was occupied by the troops that evening without difficulty, not however without a few symptoms of resistance in Atarazanas, the insurgents' stronghold; but these immediately ceased when Degollada and the other most compromised members of the Junta betook themselves to a boat covered by the French flag, and left the city with sixteen heavy trunks filled with the fruits of their disinterested patriotism.

On the same night a number of Nacionales and Patulea paraded the streets with arms and ammunition, and sang in the Catalan dialect the burlesque ditty which, during the siege, had so often cheered their spirits:—

"Zim, zim, zim;
"Madros a la paela,
"Zim, zim, zim;
"'L primer' sera'n Prim!"

"Moderados to the frying-pan; the first shall be

Prim!" Around their necks, too, was displayed the miniature kitchen-utensil, which they had unconsciously borrowed from Cobbett as a badge, and on which they had threatened so often to roast their enemies. This folly would have been suffered to pass without notice, had it not been accompanied by a refractory spirit when the order was given to lay down their arms. But various other groups began at night to assemble, and cheers were raised for the Central Junta. It was found requisite to make some arrests, and the Cabo, or commander of the patrol, having proceeded for this purpose into the midst of a disorderly group, the Patulea threw themselves upon him, and strove to deprive him of his *láton*. The Cabo, whose gray hairs had not weakened his heart, made good the arrest of his prisoners, and one of his assailants received a severe sword-cut on the head from the hand of one of the general's sons. The rioters were dispersed, and some of the most *pillo* amongst them fled the city.

When Sanz entered Barcelona, it immediately struck him, as an admirable measure of security for the future, to convert the fort of Atarazanas into a citadel, as well as Montjuich. Atarazanas commands the Rambla, as Montjuich does the Plaza San Jaime, and the Plaza del Palacio. Sanz's idea was not much inferior to that of Louis-Philippe, with reference to the fortifications of Paris, except that he talked no nonsense about "apprehension of the foreign invader." The government adopted and subsequently proceeded to carry this plan into effect, throwing no disguise whatever over the fact, that the design was to keep

in check their own Patulea, the *gamins* of Barcelona. So formidable is this turbulent population, and such tremendous proofs of desperate valour did they give within the last year, that the government at the same time formed the resolution of garrisoning the town for the future with seventeen battalions.

The events of this two months' siege were unmatched in the history of the world. The volunteers, composed of Patulea and Cuerpos Francos, formed the most turbulent and picturesque troops in existence, and wandering amateurs or outlaws from all countries swelled their ranks, including sixty French republicans, who had come *en masse* from Paris and Perpignan. The Junta of Defence held its sittings in a vault of the suppressed Holy Office; and in this carnival of wild abandonment, scoffing at their heavenly king as well as at their earthly rulers, the mad Patulea dragged a crucifix in derision, with a cord round its neck! To avoid the imputation of unilateral ruffianism, Narvaez's artilleros from Montjuich, on the Queen's birthday, to do it especial honour, fired a royal salute, *with ball*, against her Barcelonese subjects!

Astounding were the shifts resorted to by the Patulea during the last days of the bombardment. When the cold set in towards the end of October, and they began to feel the pinch of their ragged condition, they broke open the cloth Almacenes, and tore up the bales as they met them into such lengths as they deemed convenient. This done, every man performed his own tailoring. For the colour of the cloth, or the materials with which they stitched it,

they were utterly unsolicitous. In the Plaza de San Jaime, and on the ramparts, these volunteers of the Jamancia were seen sewing up, as you would a sack, with packing-needles and twine, extemporised breeches—of which "inexpressibles," indeed, would be the suitable name; sleeveless coats, and a rough-hewn reproduction of the ancient Spanish mantle, chosen for its handiness, and for its not encumbering the muscular movements in serving the guns and fighting. Hats of all shapes and sizes surmounted this hasty wardrobe; the round and tufted sombrero, the high-peaked hat of the old Spanish shape, the wide-leafed light brown felt, constructed for protection from the sun, the red gorro, the straw hat, the glazed, the peaked, and the woollen nightcap. Some, who were too late at the rifling of the Almacenes, were still in their shirts, or had the native striped blanket—a sort of plaid—round their shoulders; and many who had arranged themselves in spick-and-span-new broadcloth had their feet entirely naked!

To complete this remarkable picture, the banners of red and black,—displayed by them on Atarazanas and their other forts, and, indicating their determination to die before surrendering, were made up from the spoils of the rifled woollen stores, and—indicating thus involuntarily the triumph of our manufacturing industry—were composed of British broadcloth!

There has scarcely been a political disturbance during the present century, either in Europe or America, in which Englishmen, with their restless and enterprising character, have not directly participated.

In Greece and in Columbia, in Paris and at Warsaw, in Spain, and Portugal, and Circassia, our countrymen have been found in the thickest of the fight—everywhere soldiers of liberty, prepared to ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm; perhaps, too, mixing sometimes in matters which did not much concern them, and taking rather an erroneous view of political questions. Still, right or wrong, they have been with the people. During the last siege of Barcelona, two Englishmen, named Prior and Garrett, played a very efficient part in directing the movements of the Jamancia, and constructing the various batteries. A Genoese, named Merello, likewise took an active part. These strangers volunteered into the free corps, and led their sections of Patulea through the whole two months' siege, assisting, it is said, as skilfully in the gunnery practice as if they had been members of "The Honourable Artillery Company" of London. They left Barcelona together for Port-Vendres, in the Spanish steamer *Fenicio*, with two members of the Revolutionary Junta, Don Ramon Coll and Don Narciso Negrebernis. The steamer *Cameleon* likewise bore to France nearly one hundred officers of the Cuerpos Francos, who, not relying on the capitulation, had sought the protection of the tricolor. Strange how a little travel opens one's eyes. The keen debates in the last session of Parliament about the registry of arms in Ireland, where fine and imprisonment was the only punishment proposed, make one a little curious as to how they manage these matters in other countries. Here is a Spanish arms-bill:—"Don Laureano Sanz, Captain-

General of Catalonia, &c. The public tranquillity was threatened yesterday by armed groups of the national militia of this capital.

"In the Plaza del Rey and the Barrio of Gracia, there were uttered *vivas* for the Central Junta, the seditious provoking the peacefully disposed, and singing *alarming ballads* at the risk of promoting scenes which must be avoided—to that end I ordain and command: 1. The National Militia of Barcelona shall give up its arms, accoutrements, ammunition, drums, and trumpets, within the period of six hours from the publication of this Bando, to the Commandant of Artillery in Atarazanas. 2. Any individual not complying with the foregoing requisition will be shot immediately. 3. Domiciliary visits for the purpose of search are hereby authorised; and any person in whose house a musket shall be discovered will be instantly shot, unless the owner of the weapon shall be discovered in the said house. But in case of his discovery the owner of the said weapon will be shot, and the occupying tenant of the said house shall pay a fine of 100*l.* Catalan; but if he shall not have wherewithal to satisfy this demand, he shall be sentenced to six years' imprisonment. 4. Penalties of proportional amount will be inflicted for the offence of concealing swords, pistols, bayonets, accoutrements, ammunition, drums, and trumpets. Barcelona, 22nd November, 1843." This proclamation had the desired effect.

Modern civil warfare in Spain is so practised in the means of defence and demolition, that all the other nations of Europe may upon occasion borrow a

leaf from her book. The science of temporary barricades has been closely studied in France, but brought to nothing like the perfection of the adjoining kingdom; and in Barcelona the streets were built across by solid Titanic walls. More than one infernal machine had been planted in the houses of the Calle de San Pedro, to be exploded in the event of the town being taken by assault; and an enormous mine was constructed at the entrance of the Plaza de San Jaime, to be sprung amid general destruction against charges of hostile cavalry.

The investment of the Castle of Figueras by Prim, in the month of December, was marked by more shocking barbarities than any that were witnessed during the previous series of Pronunciamiéntos. For this there were two reasons—first, exasperation at the sturdy Ametler's holding out with such obstinate and rugged determination, and defending Figueras the moment he had vacated Gerona; and secondly, the consciousness that he was maintaining the defence as a nucleus of encouragement for operations elsewhere by the Progresistas, upon the occasion of the affair of Olózaga. Prim proved how well he could concentrate in one person the rival atrocities of Cabrera and Nogueras; 300 Milicianos having been expelled by Ametler from the castle, as not to be depended on in the struggle, Prim, with incredible blindness of policy, refused to receive them as an allied force, or otherwise than as prisoners of war, to be dealt with at his pleasure. Contrary even to the bloodiest precedents, the two envoys sent to treat for them, in advance, were seized and summarily

shot! Upon the main body advancing somewhat nearer, in the confidence of a friendly reception, Prim ordered his cavalry to charge these unoffending men, and his infantry to open upon them a simultaneous fire. Thirty-five were killed, and twice as many wounded! The rest of this miserable band of outcasts, whom Ametler perhaps too hastily condemned, were forced to fly for shelter to the Sierra. There, for some days, they wandered like forlorn ghosts, till cold and hunger made life a pain, and death a thing indifferent, and in their despair they betook themselves to the very fortress from whence they had been expelled. Here, instead of bullets, they met protection and forgiveness; and after brief parley, Ametler again received them, his resentment softened by the monstrous inhumanity of Prim.

This singularly cruel desperado, envious of the infamy of Nogueras, sent out his scouts to seize upon the mother and sisters of Ametler, all of whom (four in number) he declared his determination to shoot, unless their gallant relation surrendered. Having possession of the town of Figueras, he likewise threatened to seize the wives and mothers, the sisters and the daughters of all within the castle walls, and hold them *in terrorem* with the prospect, so agreeable to women, of being probably shot. The answer to these sanguinary propositions was still more sanguinary; it was the discharge, in one day from the castle, against the town, of four hundred and eighty shot and shell, by which scores of houses were laid in ruins, and some of those females whose lives had been threatened, were butchered by their own relations!

True to his inexorable word, Prim subsequently seized the survivors amongst these helpless women, with matchless cruelty announcing his determination to range them, chained in close order, in front of the batteries which he proceeded to construct outside and within the town, and leave them exposed to inevitable butchery, if Ametler should dare to open a fire! No civil war has ever raged in Spain, in which women have not been victims. Ametler subsequently got most of them into the castle by stratagem; but Prim revenged himself by proclaiming that, if a suspicion should arise of their spying, he would shoot both women and children.

Ametler is a Gitano, and pattered Rommany, at times, with his Estado Mayor, some of whom, too, were of Gipsy strain, and most guerrilleros. These are rare instances of Gitanos mounting to high office in the state, for their tricks of Germania pull them down by the skirts. The dexterity of the Caloré class is unquestionable, if it could be found allied to proportional honesty. But the difficulty is in overcoming their nomad habits. They shine as guerrilleros. Ametler is a man of most determined character, and has given numerous proofs of a desperate valour. Prim is unquestionably brave, but a person of ridiculous vanity, whose head has been turned by fortuitous successes, and by being made a count and a lieutenant-general. Ametler on the other hand is a perfect guerrillero, and not in the least indisposed to make allies of robbers. He garrisoned the Castle of Figueras during the siege in great part with guerrilla troops, whom

he sent out at intervals to ravage the surrounding country.

He proceeded, early in January, after winding up the year with a long and obstinate, but useless defence of his isolated position, and an honourable capitulation, to take up his temporary quarters as a refugee at Perpignan, accompanied by Martell, Bellera, and others, to the number of thirty, and escorted to the French frontier by a detachment of Baron de Meer's cavalry. Prim was so disgusted at the appointment of the Baron over his head, that he was on the point of going over to Ametler's party and trying his chance for keeping possession of Catalonia. But the sinister reputation of De Meer and the star of Narvaez triumphed, and the vain and arrogant Prim has consoled himself with refusing the subordinate office of commandant of custom-house carabineros. His exterminating genius since lies fallow. Ametler did not break up his nucleus of insurrection, until he had received a communication to that effect from the Progresista committee at Madrid. His exiled party distributed themselves through France and Belgium.

The Barcelonese refugees had the town of Albi in France, at the foot of the Pyrenees, assigned for their residence. Before they were there a month, they were forced to make an appeal to the charity of the public, avowing that they were in the most abject distress, and that they had not been able to carry more than a few francs with them. Their begging-box was open for the admission even of sous, illustrating the beauties of revolution.

The Catalans have seen with great disgust the

re-appointment of the Baron de Meer to the post of captain-general. They remember acutely the tyrannies formerly practised by this officer, and see the evidences of a Moderado re-action in the fresh commissioning of this noted Cristino commander, as well as in a hundred instances besides. The appointment of Shelly to the post of pontifical chief of Barcelona—the same general whom one of Zurbano's serjeants wounded in the wrist in the famous fraternizing field of Torrejon,—a most uncourteous act, seeing that no one else was wounded there—spread dismay amongst all but Moderados; and multitudes fled to France.

It must, however, be added, that the terror thus struck into the hearts of the Patulea was a signal for the revival of hope amongst moneyed men, and that numerous *proprietarios*, capitalists, and bankers, who before had shunned the re-opened city, now crowded through its gates, and proceeded to resuscitate their buried treasures. Some of these stores had already yielded to the assiduous investigations of the vanished Junta, and their travelling expenses to France were easily and pleasurably paid. The poorer rogues betook themselves on the Sierras to the congenial employment of robbers, the turbulent district of Mastrazgo, which the affair of the Queen and Olózaga at Madrid incited to fresh devilries, sent forth its guerrilleros to prowl in all directions, the Facciosos of Groc were again on the alert, and the captain-general of Valencia and the intrepid colonel Zavala in vain endeavoured to remove the scourge.

CHAPTER XXI.

ASPECT OF MADRID.—THE PUERTA DEL SOL.

The general aspect of Madrid has greatly improved since the Revolution of La Granja and the promulgation of the Constitution of 1837. I do not at all believe that the mere series of words, of which that incongruous state-paper is composed, has either altered materially the face of the country, or beautified the metropolis. But if it has not proved an ark of the covenant, nor allayed the angry waters of civil disturbance, it has afforded at least some token of stability, and appeased, if not extinguished, the passion for change. Within seven years it is undeniable that a visible improvement is perceptible, and that material amelioration, and experience in the science of comfort, have penetrated even to those cold and central regions where all was cheerless and miserable. There is less of the solitude which passed for peace than in the era of Ferdinand, but there is infinitely more of human advancement; and if constitutions and representative forms of government have been at times shockingly abused, the freedom of thought and limb by which they have been accompanied have made their uses and their power conspicuous by a gratifying progress in the face of the most powerful obstacles.

The political vicissitudes of a country rarely affect

its metropolis. The seat of government, and centre of wealth and fashion, remains unscathed by domestic disturbances; even foreign invasion affects it lightly, unless in the rare instance of lengthened siege or bombardment. The occupation of Paris twice by the Allies did not materially affect its appearance, pursuits, or amusements, and Moscow was made no funeral pile till the torch was applied by its own inhabitants.

Madrid has had her bosom torn by domestic strife, and been a seething cauldron of political turmoil, ever since the first unsheathing of swords in the consuming War of Succession; but the face of the city has been yearly improving, and the solution of the great problem of life has been hourly progressing, slowly, yet with visible advancement. The tongue, wag it ever so idly, cannot drown the clamour of the back and stomach; and the needful provision of primary requisites is never neglected by the loudest politician. All over Spain the traces which have been left behind by the late series of Pronunciamiéntos and bombardments, are far less visible to the eye than a stranger would believe.

Meanwhile, it is not to be supposed that Madrid does not still lag far behind in the rear of European civilisation. Comfort as yet is not understood except in the higher circles, and in a portion of middle life; the numerous forced emigrations to France and England have been of essential benefit as eye-instructors; while the habits of foreign residents in the Spanish metropolis, and especially the manners and influence of diplomatic circles, have beaten down a

portion of that stubborn pride in which the Spaniard wraps himself as in a cape, impervious to the slighted civilisation of the "outer barbarians." But it is above all the travelled Spaniard who is a powerful agent in convincing his countrymen that, so far from monopolizing the world's wisdom, they are far outstripped by societies of exterior men, and that foreign inventions have their usefulness as well as ingenuity. Still Madrid to this day is singularly comfortless; and there is scarcely a decent lodging to be had in the entire metropolis. You must absolutely either live in a noisy hotel, or take a house to yourself and furnish it, which is odious to most *garçons*. The amusements are both few and uninteresting. There are two Spanish Theatres open, but these will soon grow tiresome; and the only public spectacle besides the Córtes is the Opera, where there is rarely a good company.

In the political circles of the Spanish metropolis the loss of Mr. Aston, our late minister, is acutely felt. From all parties his person and manners commanded respect and esteem; his entire devotedness to Espartero made him decided but not bitter enemies; and the brilliancy of his entertainments and fascinating freedom of his hospitality conciliated universal regard.

The character of his accomplished successor is winning the same popularity; and our future policy at Madrid will be entirely and indisputably impartial, selecting no favourites, backing no doubtful or, if decided, powerless champions, and dealing with the Spanish nation instead of individual intriguers. No

censure is here implied upon Mr. Aston, who, as well as our government, was dragged by the tide of events; but there is a mass of prejudices against England to be encountered, which demands and is receiving the most judicious treatment.

The splendid equipages of Mr. Aston have passed into the possession of Narvaez, who dashes through the streets, with an escort of Hussars both before and behind his carriage, in so royal a fashion, that no secret seems to be made of his consciousness of the fact that he is the true ruler of Spain. Long after the attempted assassination he drove out in his carriage riddled with bullets, as if in contempt and defiance of his enemies—a feeling similar to that which Quesada so often displayed, and which may unfortunately end in similar destruction.

Narvaez entertains rarely, but when he does, it is with an aim at princely magnificence, which suits his dashing character. On the evening of the day that the Queen's majority was declared, he gave an entertainment to three thousand officers of the garrison, and there being no private apartment in the metropolis which could accommodate so large a number, he hired for the occasion the entire of the most extensive *café* in Madrid.

In high political circles, the Marquis de Casa Irujo is the most magnificent entertainer. The Marquis is said to be the richest man in Madrid, and was lately spoken of for Finance Minister. He has been called the Torreno of modern Spain, without Torreno's ability.

Amongst the capitalists, Señor Carrasco has th

most hospitable *salons*. He is a leading banker, and now a man of great wealth, a warm adherent of Queen Cristina; and before he became a minister, it was in his palace (for every large house here is "a palace"), that the partisans of the expatriated Queen held their meetings. From the *millionnaire* set Mendizabal is much missed. In diplomatic circles, Count Almodovar is a frequent entertainer; but the most brilliant receptions are those of the young Duke de Glucksberg, the representative of France. Amongst the pleasantest parties are those of Madame Calderon de la Barca, the lively authoress of *Life in Mexico*, whose position in diplomatic circles through the distinguished post which her husband lately filled and through his influential admixture with Madrid politics, as well as the high literary reputation she has established by a single work, make her *salons* the resort of whatever is most refined and intellectual in the Spanish metropolis.

This lady is possessed of most attractive manners, and of refined taste, as well as keen observation. The Spaniards, though she is a foreigner, strange to relate, take pride in her, from the circumstance of the name which she bears being identical with that of their great dramatist, Calderon, from whom her husband is descended. Our country has estimable representatives here in the highest circles, and the parties of the Countess Montejo, a lady of Scottish parentage, are remarkable for the elegance which pervades them. Since the retirement of the Duchess of Victory, and during the mere girlishness of the Sovereign, there was properly speaking no female

court; and the want was chiefly supplied in private circles. But why linger in vulgar drawing-rooms, when the romance of Peninsular life is in the streets?

In modern Spain, what is called "the Stone of the Constitution," in every town plays a conspicuous part. This stone is placed in the principal square, the name of which has in all cases been altered to that of "Plaza de la Constitucion." Thus in Spain even saints have been deposed. These squares, under the new *régime*, have been commonly obtained by throwing open the abolished convent gardens. In Cadiz this is the case with nearly every one of the public squares, and the effect in such a confined and crowded city is very admirable.

The Constitutional Stone in the provincial towns, as well as in the metropolis, is inscribed with these words, taken from the Constitution of 1837: "Every Spaniard is bound at the call of his country to defend the throne and constitution with arms in his hands." Before this stone, on political anniversaries and occasions of public rejoicing, a temporary orchestra is erected, where a military band plays the Hymn of the Constitution, of Riego, the Royal March, &c., with a variety of waltzes and other pieces, and the inhabitants promenade in the square for several hours, the mantillas of the women and the velvet hats of the men making music to their dark and lustrous eyes. These promenades to military music form everywhere the chief amusement of the inhabitants. In gazing on the constitutional stone of Madrid, during the swing of Narvaez and Bravo's dynasty, I thought,

"Poor stone! you have been erected there for the purpose of being more conveniently desecrated."

The mocking Manolo first called these street-posts "friars," to mark how much he cared for their violation; but the foulest receptacle of the sewers of the metropolis, is the post before me, which he has christened "Liberty!" Such were the feelings of respectful veneration inspired by the sight of the Lapida Constitucional.

When Philip II. made choice of a barren plain as the site of his new capital, one would suppose that it must have presented some peculiar advantages to compensate for its bleakness. One cannot conceive that a monarch of his capacity, with unlimited power and an enormous treasury, could be much controlled by considerations opposed to convenience, or be slow in making the most suitable selection. Yet what this omnipotent despot did, was to choose exactly the worst site possible in the length and breadth of Spain.

At Madrid, wind, rain, and dust, in their respective seasons, have undisputed mastery; and the wintry blasts from the Guadarama hills have frozen to death, more than once, in their boxes, the sentinels at the royal palace. Beneath the summer sun it is a torrid zone, with heats as sultry, and dusts as suffocating, as in the deserts of Andalucía. Unhappily, too, like woman in the poet's libel, it is "to one thing constant never;" and the variations of temperature are of a most fatal character, carrying off numbers of the population annually with *pulmonia fulminante*. In March and October, one day is like a warm, bland May, the next like an English

February. At noon, perhaps, there is not a zephyr stirring, and the Madrileños are tempted forth to the fields which skirt the Manzanares. Presently a wind blows full from snowy Guadarama, which thoroughly explains how the ancient cloak has retained its popularity in the Spanish metropolis. You pass at once to an ice-house from an oven; and cannot choose but to admire the wisdom of the sovereign who pitched his capital 2000 feet above the level of the sea, sacrificing everything to the central point of his kingdom, with pantometral *compas* in hand: ridiculously overlooking the incomparable claims of Toledo, and caricaturing the inspired attitude of Columbus in the midst of the monks of Valladolid.

There is a sort of legislature sitting in what is styled the Legislative Palace—the Córtes of Spain—calling themselves the representatives of the nation; but the bulk of them the produce of bayonets. There is another and more powerful legislature sitting in the Queen's Palace—the Camarilla, headed by the Captain-general. But the most powerful of all—the pulse of Madrid, the barometer of public opinion, and director of popular movements—is that humble but more potent assembly which meets at the Puerta del Sol; the laziest loungers in Europe, but perhaps the most active debaters, the most swayed by prejudice and impelled by rumours, but yet correct in the main as to their estimates of character, and the conclusions to be derived from passing events.

Here there are no palatial *convenances*, nor social conventionalisms, to mislead or to suppress; no parliamentary forms of phraseology and discussion to