

particularly disagreeable to people accustomed to English habits.

After the cathedral, the most remarkable thing is the Church of San Isidoro, which has the high privilege of having the Host always visible on the altar. It is a most picturesque jumble of all sorts and styles of architecture, and the time-worn hues of the stone, throw a rich colour over its dilapidated exterior. It was built by Ferdinand, in 1603, to receive the remains of San Isidoro, the great Archbishop of Seville, whose body once rested in the Hermitage of San Isidoro del Campo, near that city. The Saint appears over the principal entrance, fighting the Moors in true Santiago style, for he too used to appear and encourage his faithful followers on the field of battle. Inside, it is a plain Gothic building; at the end, facing the altar, a low open iron door leads you into the Panteon de los Reyes, the sepulchre of many of the early Sovereigns of Castile and Leon. The roof of this small chapel is curiously painted, and still remains in its original state, having escaped the destruction which awaited all the portions of it within reach, during the French invasion.

Nothing can be worse than the restorations, the walls have been painted, and the tombs likewise, which gives the stone sarcophagi the appearance of wooden boxes. For some time the bodies were exposed to view, but the clergy have latterly had them enclosed in their coffins. On leaving this chapel by the cloisters, an inscription, in large gilt letters, strikes the eye, declaring that, "This precious monument of antiquity, the depository of the ashes of so many pious kings, was destroyed by the French, in 1809." There are inscribed the records of an invasion, which rendered this unhappy country for so many years one constant scene of war and bloodshed; an invasion, in which perished monuments of art, treasures of by-gone days, which all the gold of Australia could not



replace. That scenes of horror are ever the inseparable accompaniments of war—that in the storming of towns events may occur, and destruction be effected, which, however much they may afterwards be deplored, are at the moment beyond the restraining power of those in command—all this is indisputable; but the wholesale plunder and destruction, carried on under the authority and sanction of the French generals, never can be justified. Travel over Spain, from one corner to the other, and the same tale will be repeated—everything was carried off by the French.

Nothing was too sacred for their sacrilegious hands to plunder; the triumphs of architecture were wantonly destroyed; churches were converted into stables; and the men who could sanction such deeds, did not hesitate to carry off all that seemed worthy of pillage. The glorious creations of Murillo were torn from the altars, over which they were placed; the walls of the convents were stripped, that the choicest productions of art might grace the halls of some French Marshal, or the galleries of the Imperial palace; and the matchless works, on which the taste and skill of the Arfes had been bestowed, were melted down, to satisfy the cupidity of the conquerors. The canvas of Murillo may still adorn the walls of foreign mansions, and rejoice the eyes of the lover of paintings, but the creations of Arfe can never be replaced. The costly materials in which they were fashioned ensured their destruction.

Spaniards may indeed be excused for the bitterness of feeling, the hatred they entertain, for their neighbours beyond the Pyrenees. In peace or in war, their influence has alike been baneful to the Peninsula; and although it may be uncharitable to remember grievances, which occurred so many years ago, unfortunately they were of a class, the memory of which cannot be easily effaced.



In visiting their plundered churches and ruined buildings, the remembrance of treasures of art and of national glory, irretrievably destroyed, is continually forced upon their recollection; and wherever questions are asked, the one answer is invariably returned—it was the work of the French.

It must, however, be acknowledged, in justice to the French, that, however severe may be the censure which foreigners may pass upon their conduct: the Spaniards, as a nation, have forfeited the right to abuse them, for they have followed in the footsteps of their invaders, and profited by their example. When the regular orders were abolished, no means were taken to preserve even what had been left; many works of art disappeared in the general confusion which followed, and the most splendid triumphs of architecture—exquisite memorials of the piety of the mediæval ages—are now nothing more than mouldering walls left to ruin and decay; and this has been done by the Spaniards themselves. They have completed what the French left unfinished; and the first half of the nineteenth century has been, in truth, a sad epoch for the painting, the sculpture, and the architecture of Spain!

The convent attached to the church of San Isidoro is happily situated close to the city walls, along the top of which the monks had a pleasant walk, and enjoyed a charming view over the country. The church has a fine square tower which rises most picturesquely above the walls, which are in very good preservation, with their massive semi-circular towers. Not far distant is the grand pile of the convent of St. Mark, the façade of which is really splendid. It is a noble building, standing close to the river, and the façade is adorned with medallions and pilasters, wreathed with the most delicate plateresque work. The church has a Gothic portal, but



the interior is entirely a ruin ; in fact, the whole building had been put up to sale by auction, and was only saved by the Ayuntamiento purchasing it for the Institute. It is in a miserable condition, and students are decidedly not the class of people most calculated to preserve a building. It belonged to the knights of Santiago : one of those many princely establishments which they erected to afford shelter to pilgrims on the road to Compostella in the troublesome days of petty feuds and intestine warfare. A pretty stone cross stands in the open space in front of the convent.

All is now solitary and deserted : nothing passing in this direction, except a few country people and huge, unwieldy carts, drawn by oxen, dragging their burdens along. The wheels are very primitive ; they have no spokes, but are formed solely of a circular piece of wood, with four slits, as it were, cut out of it. Now and then a long string of mules may be seen belonging to the Maragatos, a peculiar race of people who are the "arrieros" of this part of Spain, and monopolise all the traffic to and fro on the roads. They wear a distinct costume of their own, which gives them almost a Flemish appearance, with their slouched hats, wide full trowsers gathered in at the knees, and leather jerkin. They are a strange set of people, and keep very much to themselves, rarely marrying out of their own class ; they are always wandering about from place to place, as their trade naturally obliges them, but their head-quarters are at Astorga, and its adjacent district, comprising about thirty-six villages, chiefly inhabited by Maragatos. Some of them are very wealthy ; their origin is enveloped in obscurity, and little is known respecting them.

There are several very curious old churches in Leon, with low sloping roofs and little porticos, rather in the style of some small village churches in England : we were



not able to see the interior, as they close them so early. A family to whom we had been introduced, and who was most kind in doing the honours of Leon, took me to visit one or two of the convents; but we could not penetrate within the iron gratings, and were obliged to content ourselves with looking at the pretty faces of the nuns, and talking to them at a respectful distance. The nunneries in general do not contain many architectural beauties. Unlike monasteries, they were rarely built expressly for the purpose for which they were afterwards occupied; more generally they were mansions of the nobility, bequeathed or made over to women for conventual purposes, and as such may be interesting from having undergone but few changes.

One which we visited, the Franciscan Convent of the Conception, was founded by Doña Leonor, daughter of the first Count of Luna in 1518. She gave up her own house for the purpose, and many pious nuns issued from its walls to establish other convents of the same order in Toro Villafranca, &c. We went to see another belonging to the Benedictines, the black dress of the order being most becoming to some very pretty girls who were there. The Lady Abbess here can receive her visitors very comfortably, for instead of having a small reja, which is usually the case, the iron grating extends across the whole room. They always overpower one with "dulces;" and they sent me away with such a quantity, that as I walked through the streets, I felt quite like a little school-girl, who had been petted, because she was a good child. We must not laugh, however, but take it as it is meant, in true warm-hearted kindness.

The Dominican Convent of the Santa Catalina has, since the death of the last nun, been converted into a library for the use of the inhabitants; and on the staircase, and in the principal room, pictures, collected from the old



convents, have been placed. Great has been the havoc committed in Leon among the monasteries. That of San Francisco has been destroyed, and the beautiful Gothic cloister of San Clodio has been entirely demolished; it was sold a short time ago for four thousand reals, and has since been pulled down, and the materials sold. They went partly to assist in making the roads; and a gentleman assured us he had seen some of the statues, which formerly decorated it, broken up on the new high road that has lately been made into Galicia. The Plaza de los Condes is very picturesque: a tall tower marks the palace of the Counts of Luna, and a pretty window still exists over the gateway. The façade has been coloured yellow; and in the ruined patio, porphyry columns, fragments of Berruguete staircases, and arabesque ornaments, peer out from heaps of dust and rubbish. Some of the eaves of the houses are most elaborately carved; and altogether, there are some very pretty scenes in the streets and plazas of this decaying town.

The large square is of course called Plaza de la Constitucion, and dearly do Spaniards treasure that little tablet which generally bears the first article of their constitution graven upon it above the name. Poor people! it serves to remind them they have such a thing, and it is well they have adopted this medium of proclaiming it to the world; had they not done so, it would have been difficult to believe it, and they would run a very good chance of forgetting it themselves. But they treasure it fondly, and an insult offered to that stone sinks deeper into their hearts than all the insults their governments offer to the reality. I have never seen accounts of real crime related with more indignation, than an attempt lately made in a small village by some evil-disposed person to efface this much-cherished name. When the inhabitants awoke one fine morning, they were



shocked at finding the tablet covered with a plaster of mud, hardened as the soul of him who could have planned so vile a deed; and on this were inscribed the words, "Plaza Real;" the majesty of the people had been insulted, and alcaldes, judges, and magistrates of every degree were called in to discover the monster who had committed so atrocious a crime. So long, indeed, as they are satisfied with having the name of the Constitution written up in their squares, they are right to cherish it so tenderly.

The Plaza at Leon has arcades round three sides of it, and on the fourth stands the Consistorio, flanked by two square towers with spires. People were promenading up and down in great numbers, it being the most sheltered place at this season. The inhabitants of Leon seem to have some idea of amusing themselves in their own way; they have established a casino, where there is a billiard-table, and where ladies go to take coffee, enveloped in clouds of smoke. The members have fitted it up very neatly, and give occasional balls. We went to the theatre one night to have a glimpse of the beau-monde of Leon; the actors did not seem very first-rate, but they gave one or two farces, amusing from their very absurdity. Some of the humbler class wore a red mantilla, bordered with black, which had a very gay appearance. Going out in the evening through the narrow and ill-paved street is not a very lively amusement, more particularly as walking is the fashion, carriages not having yet been introduced.

There are still several houses of the nobility existing; the most interesting and perhaps the most imposing is that of the Guzmans, where Guzman el Bueno was born, the same who is buried near Seville. Almost in ruins, it is now appropriated to some of the offices of the local government authorities. The view of the tower of San Isidoro, and part of the city walls, form a pretty



picture from the Plaza in front of this house, and opposite to it is the hospital, with old wooden galleries round the patio. The weather prevented our exploring the out-of-the-way corners of this town, and obliged us to change our route, and return to Valladolid by the road we came, and thence direct to Madrid. This we regretted much, for we had wished to see a little more of these ancient Castilian cities, and had intended returning by Zamora and Salamanca, visiting the battle-field where the Duke of Wellington reaped such laurels, and taking a glance at Avila, where there is much to interest, although it is but little known.

From Leon to Benavente and Zamora there are no means of conveyance except riding, and that could not be thought of at this season of the year. There are diligences now from Madrid to Leon, which continue on to Oviedo and Coruña. The mountain passes between Leon and Oviedo were already covered with snow, and we had to wait for the arrival of these diligences before we knew whether we could have places. Instead of arriving at the usual hour, they did not come in till two in the morning, and we had to sit up all night to await their arrival. At length we were told there were places, and we had a wretched walk in the dark and in the rain down to the Posada. At length we started, and were obliged to fraternize with our servant, a Galician, as there was no place vacant, but in the interior with us. Our other companion was one of the officials of the diligence company. If the interminable plains had appeared dreary on coming, their appearance was tenfold more miserable on our return; the whole face of nature wore a look of dreariness, the country was under water, and the mules could hardly drag the heavy vehicle through the soft mud. We were told afterwards that our companion was the owner of the mules, and consequently



the coachman did not venture to drive fast so long as he was with us.

We stopped at a miserable village to have some dinner, where they were not prepared to receive us, and the cooking presented rather an amusing study. The only fuel was chopped straw, and it was perfectly mysterious, with such primitive accessories, how anything could be prepared. The soup, however, was soon ready, consisting of bread, water, oil and a few eggs floating at the top, and a chicken, whose age must have been something patriarchal. Certainly those who are not prepared to digest anything, and make the best of whatever is set before them, will find travelling in Spain no very lively amusement; but those who are not very particular will incur no risk of starvation, and find things probably better than they have been led to expect. Bread is always good, and an excellent cup of chocolate may generally be procured; it is made very thick, and served in tiny little cups, with long thin biscuits, with which you are expected to scoop it up, spoons not being orthodox.

At the diligence-dinners some of the dishes may always be managed, and the sooner the traveller puts himself on an intimate footing with the olla the better; for he will find it welcome him on every table, from one end of Spain to the other. It introduces itself to his notice at the commencement of every dinner, with its small piece of beef done to rags; its attendant morsel of fat bacon and red sausage, which the traveller had better look upon with distrust, unless he has resolved before he enters Spain to count garlic among one of his favourite condiments; and surrounded by its coronet of vegetables and garbanzos, that tough pea, which forms the delight of every Spaniard. A good olla well cooked is not a dish to be disdained, but in general it is so stringy that it is



hardly eatable. Here all meat is done till it falls asunder; it is not very tender in itself, and they seek to remedy this defect by stewing the little good there is out of it. The remonstrance of an Englishman, who complained bitterly of the badness of the meat, was answered with an indignant exclamation by the waiter, "that it was very extraordinary, for it had been on the fire upwards of five hours!" Except at the best hotels puddings and such things are unknown in Spanish cooking, dessert always following the last dish of meat, accompanied by some preserve, which is formed more of sugar than any other ingredient. Food fit for the gods, if there were anything in a name, for one of the most favourite dishes of this description is called "angel's hair."

The sight of a Spanish kitchen does not convey any great promise, and it is wonderful what can be produced by the few means at their disposal. A brick stove, with three or four holes for placing charcoal, on which small earthenware pots are always simmering, are the sole conveniences they can command. This, together with the natural toughness of the meat, which is more essentially felt when chickens are in the case, adds to the difficulty of making any dishes which would be palatable to those accustomed to a French cuisine. In travelling, of course the fowls are always killed on the arrival of the guest; keeping them for a day or so is an idea which never enters their imaginations. A friend of ours, who was endeavouring to introduce English customs into his establishment, desired his servant to keep a fowl for two days before he cooked it. The fowl came to table, but as tough as usual; when the case was inquired into, it was discovered that the fowl had been kept alive in the kitchen for two days, the man little dreaming his master meant it to be kept after it was killed. Stewed



partridges are an everlasting dish; no game laws confining their destruction to within certain periods, they seem to form the staple food, but are dry and tasteless, partly from being so much overdone, and their flavour is far inferior to our own. Hares, too, come to table very often, although suspicions are darkly hinted that cats sometimes appear under such a favourable disguise. Spaniards seldom drink tea or coffee, and it is difficult to procure either good.

Our wretched attempt at dinner afforded sufficient topic for discussion on the road to Valladolid, to a fresh passenger we had in the interior, who was very indignant at having been made to pay six reals for so unsatisfactory a repast. Our new companion was most noisy and disagreeable, and as he occasionally joined in chorus with a very wild party who were in the *rotonda*, we were not sorry when we reached Valladolid. Our journey had occupied a much longer time than it ought to have done, on account of the state of the roads, and fresh delays awaited us here; for the same reason—the diligence from Madrid was behind its time, and we had to wait till it arrived. The inn was full, so we had no resource but to join our companions at supper, and pass the night as we could, listening to their conversation.

The other diligence arrived at about six in the morning, and delighted we were at the prospect of being able to continue our route. It came full of unhappy people, who had long journeys before them to Oviedo and Coruña, and among them a large Spanish family, consisting of a fat lady and her children, all looking very uncomfortable, as Spanish women always do when they are travelling; they seem so resigned to their fate, and with their kerchiefs tied round their heads, await with patient resignation all that may befall them. We started, and had a good four-and-twenty hours' journey before us to