

## CHAPTER V.

UP to this time Cambour, the *quasi-courrier* from Bayonne, had been of great use, not only in interpreting for us, and settling the postilions' accounts, but on every emergency he was ready to jump down from the pile of luggage behind, upon which he was usually perched, and at the end of each stage he unfastened the horses, and brought out the fresh set, with such marvellous activity, considering the country through which we were travelling, that we began to regard him as a most valuable acquisition.

There being nothing to detain us at Tolosa, we were off betimes for Vittoria. The country continued very pretty, and pastoral, with trout-streams in every dingle and glen, whose water-power was employed here and there to serve the base uses of a factory, many such establishments being scattered through these highland valleys,

to the certain detriment of their beauty, and probable demoralization of the inhabitants. A considerable amount of traffic seems to be carried on in this neighbourhood, and we were continually passing long files of mules drawing carts of the country, which presented the rudest specimens of the wheelwright's craft I ever fell in with. They consist merely of a bed (to speak in carpenters' phrase), enclosed at the sides, but open at each end, while the wheels are solid circles of wood without spokes, larger in circumference than the largest mill-stones, and being utterly unacquainted with grease, they make a creaking that can be heard a quarter of a mile off, setting one's teeth on edge for the rest of the day.

We were greatly struck, while passing through the different villages on our route, with the number of fine old houses, now, alas! in sadly-reduced circumstances. Built to be the family mansions, *casas solares*, of the noble and high-born, they now bear the stamp of abject poverty, and are tenanted by the mendicant and pauper, though still retaining the arms of their original possessors. These, sculptured out of freestone in a massive bold style, and enriched with most elaborate details, overhang the principal

entrance, reminding you that you are travelling among a people, who have elevated "the pomp of heraldry" to a higher position, than it ever attained in any other country, and within the range of its scanty literature no fewer than 1500 publications on that single subject may be enumerated. Mansions of this description are to be found, not here and there, but in all parts of the northern provinces, hardly a village being without several such memorials of bygone greatness. Wooden balconies are very general, many of them being highly ornamented with pretty carving, much after the fashion of the larger châteaux in the Simmenthal, and as we passed they looked bright and gay with pots of carnation in full bloom, that being, apparently, the favourite flower of the non-horticultural Spaniard, as we saw it, and no other, wherever we went, from the Bay of Biscay to the Straits of Gibraltar.

This would be a charming country for a fisherman to ramble through in early summer, abounding as it does with beautiful trout streams, one of the largest being the Deva, our Dee, a name which has probably been Latinized from the Celtic word *du*, black, many terms traceable to the same source existing on each side of the

Pyrenees, as the Adour, derived, like Douro, from *dufr*, water, and Gave, from *Avon*, a river.

Mondragon, where we changed horses soon after midday, seems a most interesting place, and we could have spent a couple of hours very agreeably in hunting out old houses, and other relics of antiquity. As it was, we had time to see nothing but the exterior of a church close to the posthouse, which, from a very hasty glance, I made out to be principally in the first pointed style. It has two very good doorways of great depth and massiveness, with such bold, well-cut mouldings, and highly-ornamented capitals, presenting a melancholy contrast to the general condition of the building in its untidiness, and disrepair. The old roof has been replaced by a modern affair, such as would suit a respectable cottage,—a transformation that entirely alters the appearance of the church, making the gargoyles, and other Gothic accessories, look quite out of character, as if they had no longer any business there. The bells hang everywhere in open turrets, exposed to the weather, and, as may easily be imagined, in so rainy and tempestuous a climate, it takes no long while to convert them into real bronze.

The day was everything we could desire, fresh and sunshiny, with occasional showers, producing brilliant bursts of light and shade, that imparted constant variety to this picturesque district. The posting, too, was excellent—at least in respect of its most essential quality, getting over the ground at a good pace—though the harness, which an English cart-horse would be ashamed to wear, and the drivers, carter-looking fellows, who would astound our postboys, did not quite realize one's national ideas of a neat turn-out. The various noises made by the postilions to get their animals along are highly amusing. Every team was composed, either wholly or in part, of mules, and as they appeared to entertain a conscientious objection to starting peaceably, we had a scene at every stage, when it required all the skill and patience of the driver, aided by the extensive experience of Cambour, and the united efforts of ostlers, helpers, and the other hangers-on of a posthouse, to persuade them to take the first step. For a few minutes our ears were assailed with a perfect tornado of shouts, and cries, imprecations and deprecations, which, beginning with "Anda!" (go!) "Anda! Anda!" invariably ended, when breath and patience were exhausted,

in an abbreviated form, "Da! Da! Da!" and then, after a good deal of kicking, starts across the road, or over heaps of stones, with an occasional leg over the pole, or traces, we used to get off at a tremendous pace, that, threatening at first to bring the old Coquette and her cargo to inevitable grief, gradually subsided into a more moderate speed, and carried us merrily to the end of the stage.

According to Ford, the zagal, or guard of the diligence, is sometimes obliged to pelt the team with stones, a store of which he lays up in his belt at every change. We, however, were never reduced to such an extremity as this, owing to our having a lighter load, and shorter stages, than the diligence; and the worst missiles ever hurled at the heads of our quadrupeds were the shocking oaths, and other scraps of bad language, to which the lower classes in Spain are so grievously addicted.

The road was often very hilly, and twice to-day we were obliged to have a reinforcement of oxen to pull us up a long ascent. At the last posthouse, Arrayabe, before entering Vittoria, we were a good deal struck with the figure of an old Jew, who had taken shelter from the pouring rain, with which the afternoon closed, under the

eaves of the stable. He was dressed in a black gabardine, a garment resembling a loose cassock without sleeves, having holes for the arms, and descending to the feet. His hat was just like a beef-eater's, and underneath there peered forth a pair of small, keen, prying eyes, full of distrust and suspiciousness. He looked the very picture of a modern Isaac of York, and though no longer exposed to the same oppression, and cruelty as his prototype, he seemed to feel that all the world was against him, and in every one he saw a probable enemy. The poor old man, however, was not devoid of good-nature; for, seeing the postilion struggling to get into an upper garment, he meekly lent his assistance, receiving no thanks, nor even a nod of acknowledgment in return,—treatment to which he was, evidently, perfectly accustomed. On looking back, I am glad we took such particular notice of him, for we never again saw any one that bore the least resemblance to him in costume, and general appearance.

Vittoria, the scene of the Duke's last great victory in Spain, where, as Southey says, "the French were beaten before the town, in the town, through the town, out of the town, behind the town, and all about the town," is a poor place, with a shabby modern air, that in this

old-fashioned country has quite a vulgar look. Being, however, on the great high road between Madrid and Bayonne, with others branching off to Pamplona and Bilbao, it possesses a superior inn, where at the *table d'hôte* we met several English, of whom we had hitherto fallen in with very few, Mr. Brassey, the eminent railway contractor, being of the party, having come out to superintend the construction of a railroad between Bilbao and Tudela.

Being obliged to move about the country a good deal, he had taken several horses and carriages from England, and on my going out next morning into the stableyard, I was soon accosted by his groom, who, after his enforced silence among the natives, seemed delighted to have a chat with me in his beloved mother-tongue. He gave a piteous account of what he, an English groom, had to go through in that outlandish country, where he could get neither hay, nor oats, and had to feed his horses with barley, "pigs' vittels" in fact,—a diet which he regarded as highly insulting to any respectable, well-bred nag, brought up from foalhood among the comforts of an English stable.

He had all the feelings of a thorough groom, and evidently thought much more of the discom-



fort to which "they poor dumb creatures" were exposed, than any privation of his own, though the Spanish kitchen would prove but a sorry substitute for the beef, and beer of a servants' hall at home. I was glad to perceive, that after he had unbosomed his grievances, and elicited my sympathy, and condolence, he seemed considerably relieved, and felt disposed to take a more cheerful view of things.

While taking my usual early stroll, seeing a good doorway to a church very similar to those at Mondragon, I went in, and found the interior was in the Renaissance style, highly ornamented with shields, and other heraldic devices, fruitage, flowers, &c., all of most elegant design, and admirable workmanship. Having long been desecrated, it now serves as a forage-store to some cavalry barracks, the whole area being filled with straw, which was piled up to the very roof of the apse, just where the high altar stood, while dirty troopers in undress were lying down, and lounging about.

## CHAPTER VI.

OUR destination to-day, October 7, was Burgos, a distance of about eighty miles, and the road, which lay through a succession of basin-shaped table-lands, was interesting chiefly from the exactness, with which it satisfied one's preconceived notions of Spain, taking us through desert-like plains, where tree, and hedge are unknown, dotted with sparse, shelterless villages, and swept from end to end by every wind of heaven.

It has often been remarked, that few countries, as delineated on the face of a map, are so destitute of lakes as Spain, none larger than a mere mountain-tarn being anywhere perceptible. This is a very remarkable feature, when the number, and extent of its mountains are considered. But, in passing through the country, you have no difficulty in accounting for that peculiarity. There are lakes in abundance, many of them covering a great extent of surface; but unfortunately, instead of adding to

the beauty of the landscape, they serve a contrary purpose, being utterly devoid of water, and have been in that condition for hundreds, if not thousands of years. So, to-day, those basin-shaped plains, that opened before us one after another in monotonous succession, most of the way to Burgos, are in fact nothing but the beds of dried-up lakes, several of them enclosing a considerable area. The one lying between Vittoria and La Puebla de Arganzon is about twelve miles long by ten broad, and intersected through its whole extent by the river Zadorra, which, passing through a defile in the Morillas hills, traverses in its downward course another such basin of smaller dimensions.

Great pains have been taken to grow avenues of poplars along the wayside, an undertaking of no small difficulty in this thirsty, parched-up land (for by this time we had quitted the pastoral scenery of the Basque provinces, and were approaching the plains of Castille), though a trench is carefully cut round each tree, to enable it to retain as much moisture as possible, whenever rain falls.

It had now become quite evident, from the number of beggars, male and female, adult and juvenile, with their tattered brown clothing,

and mahogany complexion, that we were at length in veritable Spain, and at every post-house we were surrounded by a circle of dusky beings, more inclined to demand, than to solicit our alms. The nuisance becoming at last intolerable, Lord Portarlington determined to try the effect of a specific prescribed by Ford, as an infallible means of getting rid of beggars; and having carefully committed to memory every word of the spell, he addressed the leader of the next group, that attacked us, in the following terms, and with the most praiseworthy gravity, and deliberation of manner, "Perdona me, ustè" (a contraction of "vuestra merced," your grace), "per Dios, hermano!" "Excuse me, your grace, my little brother, for God's sake!" The effect of this incantation was highly encouraging. When first uttered it produced a marked sensation in the assembly, and some of the more modest spirits retired. The second time cleared all but one, and even he decamped at the third reading, and left us in peace.

As a faithful chronicler, however, I am bound to add, that at Briviesca, some stages further on, the experiment was not attended with the same success. Whether this was owing to the fact, that the majority of the mendicants was composed

of women, who have more perseverance, and hopefulness of temperament, than the males, or that, Briviesca having once been the residence of the Spanish court, its inhabitants have inherited a courtier-like pertinacity in begging, or whether it was caused by the combined action of the two circumstances, I am not able to decide.

At Miranda, surnamed after the Ebro, which intersects the town, to distinguish it from fifteen other places of the same name, we finally quitted the Basque provinces, and entered Old Castille. The custom-house people were very civil, and, seeing we were in a hurry, let us off with the mildest examination possible. It was to this place that our Astronomer-Royal, and a large party of scientific people, went for the purpose of observing the eclipse of the sun on the 18th of July last, an expedition that deserved the success it achieved.

Many persons have found the country, through which we were now travelling highly uninteresting. Ford even goes so far as to recommend sleep, as the only expedient to make the journey bearable. We were more fortunate, owing probably to the season; for the frequent rain-storms had not only laid the dust, which in those plains of chalky clay must be intolerable during

hot weather, but they were continually producing a succession of such striking atmospheric effects, as would have made any scenery interesting. To me the views were perfectly novel, glorious in the extreme from their vast extent, richness of colour, and the magical alternations of light and shade, which gave an endless variety of expression to the landscape. Deepest hues of purple and violet, suffused occasionally with a golden glow, lay upon a range of mountains far away to the north-west, like a halo of unearthly splendour. Lord Portarlington was continually reminded of Egypt and Syria, and even I, whose oriental experiences have never extended beyond a shilling investment in Burford's Panorama of Nineveh, could not help feeling, that I was now indeed gazing at scenes which vividly realized the imaginings, and pictures created by descriptions of the East. Nor are we the only wayfarers that have discovered attractions in those wide sweeping plains. The Duc de St. Simon, a man by no means inclined to sentimentalism, when he made the journey a hundred and fifty years ago, at the same time of year, was greatly struck with the transparency of the atmosphere, "and the views and perspectives, which changed every moment."

At no great distance from Miranda comes Pancorvo, a mountain-pass in miniature, overhung with such picturesque castellated rocks, that reminded me of more than one spot on the way between Prüm and Trèves. In olden times this was a post of great importance, being on one side the natural portal and barrier of Castille, and one of the approaches to Madrid, and on the other, serving as a permanent obstacle to the Moorish advance on the northern provinces. Now it is quite dismantled, and has nothing else to do but to diversify the route, and fill a corner of the artist's sketch-book, wherein, that narrow cleft in the limestone rock, barely wide enough to allow passage for the river Oroncillo and the Queen's highway, combined with the quaint old houses of the little town, nestling under the shadow of ruinous towers, would form very effective objects.

When we passed through, the population was in a state of unusual excitement, and two or three bells were ringing furiously, in honour of the Archbishop of Burgos, who was making a confirmation-tour in this part of his diocese. His carriage, an antiquated green fly, drawn by a pair of mules, in which the most ardent Church-reformer could have detected no excess of pre-

latical pomp or luxury, stood at the Cura's door. We afterwards heard a very pleasing account of the Archbishop, while we stayed at Burgos, and having been brought up in England, he always shows attention and kindness to any of our countrymen, who come in his way.

Being anxious to reach Burgos betimes, we travelled on, all day, without stopping, except to change horses. About sunset, feeling the want of some refreshment, I went in search of a draught of milk, while halting at the post-house of Briviesca. I wandered up and down the street in vain inquiries, the natives staring as if they thought me demented. I was not then aware, that milk is about the last thing you should ask for in many parts of Spain, the mythical article ascribed by schoolboys, on the 1st of April, to the pigeon, being quite as easily procured, as the produce of the cow in certain seasons.

Briviesca is rather pretty, and, being surrounded by gardens and orchards, has nothing of that dried-up and parched appearance so noticeable in the towns of this province. It is said to have suggested the plan of Santa Fè, built by Ferdinand and Isabella during the siege of Granada, though certainly that place could never have derived its unequalled hideousness from Briviesca.



It would make a very good halting-place for those, who have sufficient leisure, and, judging from Ford's description, the old convent of Oña, on the Ebro, four leagues and a half off, must be in every respect worthy of a visit.

It was dark long before we reached Burgos, having enjoyed, soon after leaving Briviesca, the spectacle of a glorious sunset, which spread over the western sky some of the finest combinations of rich dark colouring I ever beheld, purple, violet, and crimson, being the predominating hues ; and in such an atmosphere, where every object stands out in mellow distinctness, it was quite a pleasure to watch each gradually disappear in the deepening gloom, until at last night had swallowed up every one, and left us nothing to look at.



## CHAPTER VII.

**B**URGOS being one of the most interesting towns in Spain, it was decided we should stay there from Friday night till Monday morning. I have forgotten the name of our inn, which stood just opposite a cavalry barrack, so that every morning at six we had the full benefit of the toot-a-toot-too, toot-a-toot-too, reveillé, with which Spain awakens her troopers. This was quite a superior hotel, having excellent rooms, handsomely furnished, and very tolerable cooking. Our only objection to the house lay in the swarms of enormous cats, that roamed to and fro through every apartment, with a free-and-easy air, indicative of a lengthened supremacy; while their horrible caterwaulings, which more resembled the nocturnal cries of wild beasts, than the utterances of any respectable domestic animal, "made night hideous." Everywhere, since crossing the frontier, we had remarked the

size and number of the cats; but at Burgos they reached their culminating point, and became a positive nuisance. Whichever way you turned, some hardened old Tom of almost Pre-adamite proportions came into view, goggling at you with his great green eyes, and evidently regarding your presence as an impertinent intrusion on his hereditary domain. Even Whittington would have been shocked at the general demeanour of the Burgos cats, so contrary to all English notions of feline propriety.

The Cathedral was, of course, our first "lion." Like most such buildings in Spain, it is so crowded with works of art—sculpture, wood-carving, alabaster tombs, retables, ancient Church-plate,—among which a superb processional Cross was pre-eminent,—some choice paintings, and a most glorious array of metal-work,—such as altargates and railings (a *spécialité* of Spanish ecclesiastical art)—that days might well be devoted to their examination. Such cursory visits, as we were able to make, served more to exhaust mind and body, than to leave a clear, satisfactory impression of so multitudinous an assemblage of beautiful objects; and it was, no doubt, from some highly philanthropic motive, to spare future travellers any additional confusion of brain, that