to an issue by asking the daughter, "Whether they were Catholics, or heathens?" and "If it was part of their religion to deny shelter to the stranger? Even the most uncivilized savages are accustomed to exercise hospitality towards any wayfarers that may stand in need of it; while here, in a Christian land, where the Catholic faith is universally professed, three travellers are denied admittance into a house of public entertainment, at an hour when it is impossible to obtain lodging elsewhere!" This appeal to the most accessible side of a Spaniard's disposition brought the woman to her senses, and without another word she meekly went for the sheets, &c., and glad enough were we to get into our well-earned beds.

Next morning we made our first acquaintance with one of the peculiarities of Spanish travel, which subsequent experience soon made familiar —we could not get a drop of milk, and the mere asking for some seemed to be regarded almost as a personal affront!

Castillejo stands at no great distance from the mountains dividing the two Castilles; and such a wind as came rushing down the ravines, lashing us right and left with whips and scorpions, I have never felt, except in some of the

most-exposed Alpine passes. As all the head-gear, except the hood, of the old Coquette had been removed before we started from Bayonne, we had little protection from those icy blasts, and had to fend off their assaults with cloaks and umbrellas. The road winds slowly to the summit of the pass through a bleak and tree-less depression between the mountains, which, despite their height of some 5000 feet, are entirely devoid of interest, being mere rounded elevations of no more character than an ordinary sheep-walk; and we were not sorry to find ourselves descending the other side, at a pace that soon brought us into a more-sheltered district.

Between Buitrago and Lozoyuela, we passed through a very singular tract of country, which Wordsworth would doubtless have described as "a chaotic wild," though my prosaic mind could not help at the moment likening it to a vast natural stoneyard, out of which many and many a Stonehenge might be hewn, covering an extent of about three miles, where granite blocks of every size and shape were strewn about in strangest confusion, as if they had descended in a deluge from the tempest-shattered crags over-hanging this wilderness of stone. The cold gray

of the granite, contrasted most effectively with the rich colouring of the distant landscape, which, opening out over boundless plains in the direction of Madrid, lay flooded by streams of slanting sunshine. Two great birds, eagles or vultures, sailing grandly over the serrated ridge to our right, were quite in harmony with the desolate grandeur of the spot.

Just as the day closed, we began to descend from the high ground, over which most of to-day's route lay, into the great plain surrounding Madrid; and though its usual appearance has no more attraction than is commonly presented by any boundless extent of arid corn-land, yet at that moment the approach of night, and the dark shades of indigo that shrouded the distant uplands, imparted a solemn, mysterious character to the scene, redeeming it from the commonplace aspect it generally wears. Cambour asserted, that Madrid itself was visible from this point; but that worthy's moral character having greatly declined in our estimation, we scarcely credited the assertion.

At the last stage before entering Madrid we had to wait some time for horses, and, having had nothing to eat except some fruit since breakfast, were very glad to employ this interval

in the consumption of what were called pigeons (though, for all we could tell, they might have been rooks cooked *à la colombe*), at a very dirty-looking *venta*, where a large party of natives were taking their supper. Another hour saw us driving into the *porte-cochère* of the Hotel Peninsulares, very thankful to have so prosperously concluded a journey generally described by travellers as the very essence of all that is tedious and uninteresting.

CHAPTER IX.

THE excellent situation of the Peninsulares gave us a very favourable first impression of Madrid, when we looked out next morning, curious to see what this least-visited of all European capitals was like. The Calle de Alcalá, in which the hotel stands, is spacious and handsome; and as, adapting itself to the inequality of the ground, it gradually rises from the Puerta del Sol, and then, from its central point, descends on the other side in a gentle slope towards the Prado, it presents a very imposing appearance, and would be an ornament to any city in Europe. All the time, however, a sort of unconscious feeling lurks in the mind, that so thoroughly modern and western-looking an assemblage of shops and houses as meets the eye on every side, has no business to be the capital of so old-fashioned and semi-oriental a country as Spain. Nor does that feeling pass away

when you extend your observation into other quarters of the town. Go where you will, not a token of antiquity is to be seen; for even the churches, which in most towns stand like Patriarchs among public buildings, do not here claim an earlier date than two or three centuries. In fact, nothing at Madrid looks old, except the fountains, whose atmosphere (if I may use such a term) of moisture and damp, added to the incessant use made of them, has invested them, in a certain degree, with the appearance of age.

If we now turn another way, the front windows of the hotel command the Puerta del Sol, into which several principal streets, Calle de Montera, and Calle de las Carretas, besides the Calle de Alcalá, debouch, making it the most animated and crowded spot in all Madrid, though its unfinished state and low position deprive it of every claim to beauty or picturesque effect; while its architectural pretensions are exceedingly mean and shabby. It owes its high-sounding title, the "Gate of the Sun," which leads you to expect something transcendental, to the circumstance, that when Madrid covered less ground, the east gate used to stand here. But now, when new buildings extend so far

beyond it "towards the rising sun," the Puerta del Sol has become almost as central in situation as it is certainly in all social respects; and if you wish to see whatever stir and life Madrid contains, this is the place to go to, and at all hours, save and except when a bull-fight is proceeding, you are sure to find there something to catch the attention of a foreigner.

Our Burgos acquaintance, Mr. Rider, had recommended us to the Peninsulares, chiefly on account of its situation; and though its entrance and basement are filthy, in addition to some other considerable defects, yet altogether we were tolerably comfortable there, and nothing could exceed the civility and attention of the landlord, an English-speaking native of Gibraltar, who was always at his post, and, by doing his own duty, took care that all his people did theirs also.

There is another hotel, very superior in point of comfort and cleanliness, opposite the English Embassy; but it is so very far out of the way, and so dreadfully quiet for those who wish to see what is going on, that we became perfectly reconciled to the deficiencies of the Peninsulares, and felt no desire to change our quarters.

We see the Queen drive out most evenings

about nightfall, just when the rest of the world is going home, and she seldom returns before it is quite dark. There are generally three or four carriages-and-six, uncommonly well appointed, with beautiful horses; coachmen, postilions, and footmen, being very well got-up, and the whole turn-out is worthy of Royalty. But what delights us most of all in the *cortège* is "the coach of respect," an empty carriage, with blinds down, drawn by four lovely cream-coloured horses, which brings up the rear of the procession, having very much the same office to perform in the Royal retinue, that empty carriages do with us at funerals. The idea is thoroughly Spanish, and is quite in keeping with the traditional notions of the most ceremonious people in Europe.

We used to remark, that when the King goes out like a private gentleman, and drives a light open carriage-and-pair, he hardly gets a bow, even when passing along the much-frequented Calle de Alcalá, as if his state-worshipping subjects did not think it worth while to give themselves the trouble of uncovering for so slender an equipage. But, at the approach of the grand procession, coaches-and-six, *coche de respetto,* and smart escort of Lancers, off goes

every hat in the presence of such unmistakable tokens of royalty.

One of the characters in "Contarini Fleming," the hero's stepmother, has great respect for furniture. The Spaniards entertain the same feeling towards carriages; and as we travelled from Irun to Madrid in the lumbering old Coquette, a vehicle that exhibited a good many Peninsular peculiarities of construction, bows seemed to come by instinct from almost every wayfarer we passed.

As soon as Lord Portarlington had left his name at the English Embassy, an invitation to dinner for the same evening was sent immediately, in which I was kindly included, Sir Andrew Buchanan being at the moment so much engaged with urgent business, that he could not call till next day. Feeling unwell, I did not avail myself of Lady Buchanan's kindness, but enjoyed afterwards the pleasure of joining her party twice, spending each time a very agreeable evening. Indeed, most of our enjoyment while at Madrid was owing to the great kindness received at the Embassy, where the national hospitality is maintained with as much refinement, as liberality, in the midst of a society, where dinner-giving is unknown. It

is a real satisfaction to an Englishman, to observe how much his country's representative is respected, among a people by no means disposed to regard foreigners with too favourable an eye.

One of the evenings we dined at the Embassy, Don P. Gayangos, the author of "Mahommedan Dynasties in Spain," and, to use the words of Ford, "the first Hispano-Arabic scholar of his day," was of the party.

When, for the first time, I went *up* to the *table d'hôte* (for, contrary to the wont of any other hotel I was ever in, the *salle-à-manger* of the Peninsulares is at the very top of the house), I found eight or ten compatriots at table. Next to one of these, a fine, well-grown specimen of the true Englishman, of frank simple manners, and open countenance, I had a place assigned me. Judging from his moustache and beard, I set him down as an officer from Gibraltar. He turned out, however, to be a clergyman, of the name of Southwell, and had acquired those soldierly appendages in the Crimea, where he served as an Army-Chaplain. He and I soon struck up an acquaintance, and we saw a good deal of him, both at Madrid, and afterwards at Seville; for he was one of those kindly, warm-

hearted natures, so peculiarly attractive among strangers; and when we parted for the second time, it was in the hope of meeting him once more at Gibraltar, where he purposed going before he sailed from Cadiz for the Havannah. From some cause, however, we never saw him again, and the other day, greatly shocked were we to hear, that while on a tour in Canada, he was thrown from his horse, and killed on the spot, in the very prime, and flower of his age. He had travelled much, both in Europe and in the East, and his genial disposition seemed to have won friends wherever he went. He gave promise of eventually settling down into a very useful country clergyman.

I never look back to that dinner, without melancholy feelings, as another of the merry party, with whom I spent so agreeable an hour, and he one of the youngest and most animated of the company, a Mr. Blakeway, who resided permanently at Madrid, has long been numbered with the dead, having fallen a victim to one of those deadly fevers, so common to that climate, in the course of last winter.

Indeed, even during our short stay of ten days, we had a fatal proof of the extreme unhealthiness of Madrid, in the death from typhus of a young

Englishman, named Waring. He was an engineer of considerable distinction and more promise, and had gone there on business connected with some of the railways in progress. There being at the time no Chaplain attached to the Embassy (a deficiency that I understand has since been supplied, chiefly by the liberality, and exertions of Sir Andrew Buchanan), I was requested to officiate at his funeral. It took place at the English Cemetery, which Lord Howden had so much difficulty in securing for the use of our countrymen. It is still unconsecrated, nor is there, I fear, much probability that Spanish intolerance will grant to the reverential feelings of Englishmen, a boon they would grieve to have denied to themselves. It is, however, properly enclosed with a high wall, and the authorities (especially our Consul, Mr. Brackenbury) take great pains to have everything about it kept up with scrupulous care.

The first portion of the Burial Service was celebrated in a vaulted room within the gateway (which a trivial outlay would soon convert into a very tolerable substitute for a cemetery chapel), and, as the glorious words of St. Paul fell on the ear, like the notes of a trumpet, the bonds of a common religion, and country, seemed to come

home with peculiar force, while I remarked the presence of several persons (Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake among the number) totally unconnected with the deceased, except by the ties of Christian brotherhood in the Church of England, who, in spite of rain and storm, had come that day to express their sympathy with his sorrowing relations, and whose demeanour gave proof, that, go where one may, there are still to be found tender, loving hearts, which can weep for them that weep, even though they be utter strangers, and "from their own, have learnt to melt at others' woe."

CHAPTER X.

OUR first enterprise, in the way of sight-seeing, was a visit to the magnificent Museo, the finest picture-gallery in the world, which is said to contain a larger number of good paintings, and a smaller proportion of indifferent ones, than any in existence. As far as regards the convenience of strangers, nothing can be better managed, and every day, and all day through, the massive portals of the Museo open to your touch, without the intervention of a silver key, and, once in, you find a number of most civil attendants, who appear to take a pride in making your visit as agreeable as possible.

No gallery can be better adapted for the quiet study of pictures; and as you wander through those spacious, shady rooms, far away from the din of the town, you not only feel yourself to be in the presence of some of the noblest works of Art in the world, but to have besides everything you require for the thorough enjoyment of them.

Your sole difficulty arises from the overpowering array of beauty meeting the eye on every side, which makes selection impossible, until the first burst of excitement has somewhat subsided.

It has often been remarked, how vividly the grandeur of Nature, as it is revealed in some of her sublimest scenes, brings home the sense of man's insignificance. But there is no situation where I so keenly realize my own limited powers of observation, as when brought face to face, for the first time, with such a multitude of master-works, as are contained within the walls of some great picture-gallery. I long to have every faculty multiplied tenfold, so as to possess in some adequate measure the capacity for apprehending, and mastering, the myriad impressions produced by contact with those glorious emanations of genius; and as one idea crowds upon another, and image chases image in rapid succession through the mind, I wander about in helpless despair, feeling as if "Chaos were come again," and had taken entire possession of my poor brain.

Let not that worthy individual, the reader, to whom so much deference is justly due, imagine for a moment, that in making the following observations on some of the contents of the

Museo, I am going to be guilty of such unpardonable presumption, as to attempt anything like a catalogue of its treasures, an undertaking none but a Ruskin could safely venture upon. I crave no more than the permission accorded to every traveller, simply to put down what I saw, and the impression left on my memory by the few paintings I had time to examine.

Our first visit was devoted to the room on the right hand as you enter, which may be truly called a National Gallery,as it contains none but Spanish paintings, by Velasquez, Murillo, Ribera, Joanes, Zurburan, and others. Velasquez, however, is the glory of this saloon, and here he may be seen in every phase of Art—portraits, landscapes, historical subjects, animals, and even the lowest scenes of common life—and in all he seems equally at home. His religious subjects are considered the least effective, and Ford, in his charming Life of Velasquez, published in the "Penny Cyclopædia," is daring enough to say that his sacred subjects are holy only in name. Yet one of his works in this room, a "Crucifixion," marked 51, appears to me to be absolutely perfect.

Boldly relieved against a sky of deepest gloom, our Lord's figure stands out in solitary sublimity,

His face partially concealed by long tresses of dishevelled hair, falling upon it like a veil; and the mind, undistracted by the presence of any other object, is absorbed in awe-struck contemplation of the greatest event man's eye ever beheld. An indescribable air of desolation pervades the whole picture, as if it were intended to represent that moment of unknown agony, when our Saviour cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—while the perfect simplicity of its composition, gives it far more reality and grandeur, than if the canvas were encumbered with a number of figures: it is indeed the Son of Man treading the wine-press alone.

This room contains some of Velasquez's finest portraits, among which 299 and 303 stand pre-eminent, representing Philip IV. and his Queen, Isabella, on horseback, in which the king's stately war-horse, and his wife's high-bred jennet, together with the countenances, figures, and costumes of the royal pair, and a charming back-ground to the King's portrait, are painted with as much freedom and grace, as if such perfection of Art were the easiest thing in the world, and you could do it yourself, if you set about it. Indeed, this is one of the most remarkable

characteristics of Velasquez, that he seems to have done everything with as much facility, as if the skill of a master came to him, like Dogberry's reading and writing, by nature, and he had been born a painter.

If you wish to understand the decline and fall of Spain, go and study its portraits, which, bridging the space of two centuries, set you down face to face with Kings and Queens, Infantes and Infantas, so that you see Spanish royalty in all its childishness and imbecility, exactly as he saw them; and you will soon cease to wonder how it came to pass, that "the first of nations" has so utterly lost her pride of place, as now, in the year 1860, to be obliged *to beg* for admission, as a first-rate Power, into the councils of European statesmanship.

Each countenance wears that peculiar expression, so noticeable in a good portrait, which convinces you, even when you do not happen to be acquainted with the features of the original, that you have before you a veritable likeness.

Some of the Kings and Infantes appear in their shooting dress, and the dogs at their side are painted as by one who knew, and appreciated, the nobleness of their nature.

Dwarfs, so much in fashion at the Spanish

Court in those days, have on his canvas, to a startling extent, the malevolent, elvish expression peculiar to such deformed creatures; and as, with instinctive repugnance, you avert your eyes from their repulsive figures, you feel almost afraid of exciting their enmity by the action, so painfully real and life-like do they appear.

But perhaps the predominating impression, created by the portraits of Velasquez, where the subject is worthy of him, is, that no master ever appreciated more keenly, the innate dignity of man, apart from mere position and conventional circumstances. Let Vandyck be the limner of princes and nobles, let Titian portray the lineaments of genius and intellect: Velasquez is still the painter of man as he stands forth in his true character—the noblest work of God.

In the same room are multitudes of pictures by other masters, most of which we had not time to look at, though well deserving a careful study. One of the most remarkable is No. 116, "Jacob's Dream," by Ribera (Spagnoletto), a work of marvellous power, and naturalness, though Jacob is a mere clownish peasant in the garb of a monk, nor does his heavy, coarse countenance exhibit the slightest indication of the rapturous feeling that would be kindled by the glories of such a vision.