

cultivated, but are now abandoned, except a few strips in the valley. We followed, for about six miles, an aqueduct constructed by the Moors, and so curiously, that if it had not been for the circular openings at intervals, to admit the air, we should scarcely have perceived it, being of the same colour as the grey rocks. We traced it to where the source gushes from the mountain, and heard the noise; but the grotto was carefully barricaded and locked. This aqueduct, worthy even of the Romans, now supplies Xativa with excellent water.

We soon afterwards left the river and village of Bahrouse (clearly an Arabic name), and had a wild ride for several hours, over extensive valleys, bounded by grey mountains. If it would but rain, which it has not done for months, the crops might spring up, and the country look verdant; but now the vales are as grey as the hills, and nothing can be more dreary. About two, we arrived at Concentayna, situated in a richer and more carefully cultivated plain, at the foot of a splendid range of mountains, with a picturesque old Moorish castle, on a steep, rocky hill adjoining. This district has more inhabitants than any we have passed through to-day. The town seemed clean, and its calvary, planted with cypresses, was pretty.

In two hours we arrived at Alcoy, which is also beautifully situated in a gorge of the mountains, which rise boldly on each side; though, as we ap-

proached the town, it appeared built on the slope of the mountain, the streets, rising picturesquely one above another. The town contains twenty thousand inhabitants, and has one straight, good street; the others are narrow, as usual in Spain. I patronised the manufactory of paper, but not the sugar-plums, for which Alcoy is famous. The promenade is pretty, and ornamented with vases, in better taste than usual. Our muleteer took us to a *café*, and said it was the *fonda*; but we found only one room without beds. The landlord fortunately would not take us in for a single night; we went to the *posada*, the inn next in rank, where we found comfortable, clean-looking rooms; but as it is now Lent, nothing for dinner but bread· eggs, and good wine. When we had commenced our frugal repast, a Frenchman, who lives there, and had some sympathy for our travelling companions, Messrs. L— and B—, came in with a live hen under his cloak, which, with difficulty he had procured; people being unwilling to sell or eat fowls on a fast day—and they seemed to look upon us as infidels for ordering it to be roasted for the morrow.

Southey, in his "Letters on Spain,"* says, they sent their man to look for provisions, and he informed them it was a fast day, and he could not buy rabbits openly, but he would bring them home

* P. 169.

under his cloak. Nearly half a century has passed away, but Spain is unchanged.

Our beds were clean and comfortable, which is a greater luxury than a good dinner; but they charged enormously for the few things they gave us.

Leaving at eight this morning, the first part of our journey was very interesting over the fine mountain pass of St. Antonio, the views, looking back on Alcoy in the narrow valley, and the two grand ranges of mountains, are very fine. When we first came in sight of the sea, before arriving at Xixona, the view is magnificent; not verdant, but wild and grand, the outline of the mountains particularly fine, but the plains as yellow as the hills for want of water. Xixona seemed a busy little town, as it was market-day, and the groups of peasants in their picturesque cloaks were such as Murillo would have been delighted with; though few of the women were good-looking. After leaving this place, we passed through a very arid region, beds of rivers without a drop of water, plains as destitute of vegetation as the hills; and this aridity seemed to increase as we approached Alicante. For six years they say their harvests have failed; they sow, but no rain falls, and the whole country is a barren wilderness. A few olive and carob-trees are scattered over the plains, and the contrast of their green foliage and the bright yellow, burnt-up fields is very remarkable. As the outline of the mountains

is always fine, these views have a certain grandeur, and a colouring, which reminded me of the East, especially when occasionally we had palm-trees and cypresses in the foreground, and Oriental picturesque groups squatted on the ground in their blankets.

We arrived at six in the evening safe and sound, which was certainly a matter of congratulation, as out of five mules, the only one which did not stumble, was the poor beast which was charged the heaviest; having to carry me on one side of its back, and Mrs. H——, with a balance of a few carpet bags, on the other. It was a comfortable and sociable way of travelling, seated in two easy chairs. At the gates we were stopped by custom-house officers, and one accompanied us to examine our luggage at the hotel; but as soon as he had turned the corner of the street, out of sight of his superiors, and the inquisitive crowd, he took a bribe, and wished us good evening.

Romans, Greeks, Goths, Moors, Spaniards and English have ruled in the picturesque and once strong castle which guards Alicante. The town is pretty. The view from the pier, of the white, clean houses; the fine, isolated, yellow rock, with its fortifications and castle on the summit; and in the distance, the grand range of mountains, is very striking: but all is as barren as the wilderness. For eighteen months, they have not had a quarter of an hour's

rain; six times the peasants have sowed their grain, and the harvests failed. Upwards of one thousand of the inhabitants have gone over to Algiers, though the Government do their best to prevent emigration, preferring, I suppose, that they should stay at home and starve. The taxes, they say, are increased every year, and the greatest misery exists in all the rural districts. The Town Hall is a handsome building, the promenade very pretty, and there seems to be plenty of good shops. In the miserable port, which affords little protection, and is nothing better than a roadstead, there are now a few sloops and fishing-boats.

The trade with England is diminished rather than increased by the new tarif, in consequence of the duty on salt fish being now higher than it was. In 1847, nineteen English vessels entered the port; in 1848, eight; in 1849, nine; and not one has entered this year. The trade with France is also very trifling.

The Marquis d'Angolfa's gallery consists of a thousand pictures, in a splendid suite of rooms, handsomely furnished, the floors covered with beautiful tapestry, which it is a pity to tread upon; but the Marquis has certainly no space for it on his walls, which are entirely covered with pictures, of different schools; his Italian paintings seemed to be mostly copies. There were some tolerable Snyders, and a Deposition from the Cross, by Rubens, a

well-finished study from the great painting at Antwerp; but the colouring was not such as to convince me it was by that master.

Among the Spanish paintings, there are some good ones by March; a splendid Orrente, a tall, noble figure of our Saviour, as the Good Shepherd, with a sheep on his shoulders and a flock around him. The expression of our Saviour and the colouring are admirable; and certainly it is the finest Orrente I ever saw. There is also an excellent painting in this collection of the patron saint of Burgos. The Marquis calls it a Murillo, which is, however, very questionable. There is a pretty little painting, by Alonso Cano, of the Virgin watching our Saviour sleeping. It is very Titian-like in the colouring, though rather paler, and is a very sweet composition. The Marquis is extremely civil, and shows his gallery himself to all strangers who send their cards and fix a time for calling.

The Posada del Vapore is good, and the wine of Alicante very fair, but sweet. We ordered a large Alpujarras ham for our journey, which proved most useful. At one o'clock, after getting our passports signed by the English Consul, who was very obliging, we started for Elche. The hand-book says there is a diligence; but on inquiry, we found it was nothing better than a covered cart, without springs, which would contain about a dozen. We, therefore, hired a tartana; and though

we had only one horse, it fortunately turned out to be an exceedingly good one.

Nothing could be more miserable than the first four hours of our route—a desert without the grandeur of the desert: the hand of man is seen everywhere; fields carefully cultivated, but now as yellow as the Saharah. When the palm-groves of Elche burst upon us, it was as delightful as approaching the Oasis Magna after crossing the desert from Thebes; and truly the Valencians may be proud of their Elche. As Mr. Ford says, “There is only one Elche in Europe.” Thousands and tens of thousands of palms surround a city, which, with its flat roofs, is quite Oriental. The men with their Moorish features, and blankets twisted round them, differ little from Bedouins. How graceful and beautiful is the palm, with its lofty stem, its feathery leaves waving and rustling with the breeze, and the young bushy shoots at its foot. The yellow fruit contrasts well with the green foliage, and when there are thousands of these together, one rising more lofty than another, nothing can be more charming. The palms are very productive, the profit of each tree being from two to four dollars annually. When they have no fruit, the leaves still yield a considerable return, being used for processions on Palm Sunday, and are afterwards fastened to the balconies, to protect (they say) the houses from lightning.

The town is very long, generally clean, and contains eighteen thousand inhabitants. We went to the church of Santa Maria, but as some religious ceremony was going on, they would not let us mount the tower to see the view. I sallied forth with my pencil, to get a sketch of my old friends, the palms, but I soon lost myself in a forest of them ; and it was only on leaving, the next day, that I saw the view from the bridge, which is truly Oriental, and reminded me most vividly of Eastern lands.

We left Elche at eight o'clock in the morning, in the tartana, having hired a couple of donkeys to diminish the fatigue of the journey, the motion of this Spanish vehicle being detestable on a rough road ; but no saddles were to be got for the animals, and we had to make them of our cloaks and coats. After leaving the palm-groves, we entered the immense plain, which, like a desert, surrounds this oasis, and passed several neat-looking farms, the owners of which had emigrated to Africa, to escape the drought of Europe. It is difficult to conceive anything more wretched than these parched plains, which require but rain to be the most fruitful in the world. Clouds, which must be tantalizing to the peasants, sometimes fly about as they did to-day, and we had rain for half an hour, but it was only partial, and we waded the rest of the day through dust as thick as the sand is generally in the deserts in Africa.

At eight o'clock we came to the village of Aboulada, which at a distance is very picturesque, with its church, ornamented with two towers and a dome, backed by a magnificent range of mountains, on which the light from a cloudy sky played so beautifully, that at times they seemed covered with snow. The flat roofs of the houses, the palm-trees, prickly pears, and the picturesque peasants wrapped in their blankets, and dark as Egyptians, almost persuaded me that I must be in the East.

We arrived at half-past eleven at Orihuela, the Orceles of the Goths and Auriwelah of the Moors. Theodimir, the Gothic Prince, after an obstinate battle with the Arabs, in which his forces were utterly routed, fled here, and deceiving Abdu-l-Aziz by dressing up the women as soldiers, made a show of resistance, which obtained terms that are worth mentioning, as they exhibit the liberality and generosity of the Moors, and account for their rapid conquest of this powerful country.

“ In the name of the merciful God, Abdu-l-Aziz makes peace, and stipulates, that Theodimir shall not be disturbed in his principality; that no attempt shall be made against his life, property, wives, children, religion, or the Christian churches; that Theodimir shall deliver up the seven towns of Orihuela, Valentola, Alicante, Mola, Vacasora, Bigerra, Ora and Lorca; that he shall not succour

or receive the enemies of the Caliph, but he shall communicate faithfully what he shall know of their hostile intentions; that he shall pay yearly, as well as every Goth of a noble family, one piece of gold, four measures of wheat, four of barley, a certain quantity of honey, oil and vinegar; and that the tax upon each of their vassals shall be half of this contribution.

“ Done the 4th of Regeb, in the 94th year of the Hegira (5th of April, 715).” Signed by four Moors as witnesses.*

Orihuela is still a large town, of twenty-six thousand inhabitants, and with its flat roofs and palm-trees, is from some points very picturesque. We observed several deserted convents: we visited one called the College of St. Dominick, and magnificent it must formerly have been. Two courts are decorated with corridors in the Italian style; the inner court is in better taste than the first, the arches more elaborately decorated. The chapel is curious and richly ornamented, but, as usual, with little taste; the carved coverings of the loggie are, however, worth observing. In the refectory, a handsome room, there is a collection of vile paintings; among the hundreds, I distinguished only three or four small ones which appeared tolerable. None of

* Laborde, vol. II.

the churches are worth visiting, though two of them had rather good pointed arched entrances. Some of the windows of the houses on the ground floor are covered with lattices of a very Eastern form, and every room to the front has its iron balcony, an indispensable requisite for a Spaniard. There you see the women with their black eyes, chattering and gossiping, and the men sometimes enjoying their cigars.

On leaving Orihuela, we had a fine view of the place, and particularly of a deserted convent, grandly situated in the midst of prickly pear trees, backed by noble hills in which there appeared to be caves. Prickly pears abound from Orihuela to Murcia, and are planted frequently in rows, and often fields of them are enclosed with hedges of aloes. Several villages we passed were surrounded with these extraordinary plantations, and looked very pretty with their thatched roofs, and groups of picturesque peasants.

These thatched cottages, instead of the more Oriental flat roofs, remind us we are now bidding adieu to the kingdom of Valencia. A Spaniard says: "Los Valencianos son gente jovial, alegre, ingeniosa, aplicada à las letras, ligeros, dados à danzas, bayles y otras pruebas de ligereza." The Spaniard's character of the Valencians being jovial, gay, ingenious, studious, light, fond of dancing and all the exercises that require activity, is quite evident on the surface,

both in the capital and in the provinces. Mr. Ford, the best authority on these subjects, says: "that in the darker shades of character, the Valencians resemble both their Celtiberian and Carthaginian ancestors, and are cunning, perfidious, vindictive, sullen and mistrustful, fickle and treacherous." From my own experience in travelling through the country, and in various dealings for pictures, I should call them cunning and mistrustful in the extreme, but I hope I have not experienced their treachery.

The numerous crosses we have passed on the road, recording as many murders, are proofs how vindictive or passionate they are. All, however agree, that the higher classes are the most polished in Spain; and certainly their urbanity, and soft, elegant language, form a striking contrast to the rough Castilians with their harsh dialect. When also I see before me a list of about thirty men, distinguished for science and literature, theologians, astronomers, philosophers, historians, poets, orators, besides the great painters I have mentioned, and other artists of considerable merit, I cannot but feel that the bad name which the Valencians certainly have in Spain (where, however, it is the fashion to abuse their neighbours), is relieved by much that is deserving of admiration. I am glad also to record an act of disinterestedness, though perhaps it may be suspected to be Spanish pride.

The gentleman who assisted me in the purchase of the Peluqueros San Juan, had been with us several days in the churches, museum, &c. Being aware that he was wretchedly poor, having lost his employment when Narvaez succeeded Espartero, and his little estate, owing to the drought, yielding nothing, I took this opportunity of compensating him for his trouble, and offered him a good commission, insisting that he was entitled to it, but with great firmness and equal good-humour, he declined my offer.

About an hour before arriving at Murcia, we passed Monte Agudo, where there is a most picturesque Moorish castle on an isolated hill. The situation is very fine, and the numerous towers in good preservation are very imposing at a distance. Soon we entered the rich plain of Murcia, which appeared a delicious garden after the dreary wastes we had crossed during the day. "Lluvia o no lluvia, Murcia siempre trigo."—(Rain or no rain, Murcia has always her crops of grain.) And such splendid crops I never saw in Europe at this season of the year. Art producing here what nature never does, a perpetual spring. The fine tower of the cathedral rises above the lofty palms and the groves of mulberry-trees. At the entrance we went through the same farce as at Alicante. An officer accompanied us to our hotel, to examine our luggage, but at the door he

received a couple of pesetas, and saved us further trouble.

This is a truly Spanish way of plundering travellers, less dangerous, as Southey says, than stopping them on the high road, and less humiliating to their pride, though certainly not less disgraceful than begging. The system of octroi duties, which seems to be a constant accompaniment of the Bourbon dynasties, affords them the opportunity.

CHAPTER IX.

MURCIA—THE CATHEDRAL—VIEW FROM THE TOWER—SAN NICOLAS — STREETS — RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS ON GOOD FRIDAY—GALLERY OF DON JOSÉ MARIA ESTOR.

MURCIA is one of the smallest kingdoms in Spain, but its excellent port of Cartagena, the new Carthage, attracted the Carthaginians. Though the inhabitants of this city have always enjoyed the reputation of being the most illiterate in the Peninsula, in the War of Succession they showed they were not destitute of courage. Having sided with Philip V., and the town being open and incapable of defence against the Archduke, Luis de Belluga the Bishop, who commanded the people, opened the reservoirs, cut the canals, and turning the river Segura, inundated the country, so that the Archduke could not advance; and the Bishop, marching at the head of a little army he had raised, seized Orihuela, and laid siege to Cartagena, which he compelled to sur-

render. Murcia suffered like its neighbours in the Peninsular war. The modern capital was entirely built by the Arabs with the materials of a Roman city in the neighbourhood; and Abu-l-feda says that this took place during the reign of the Beni Umeyyah dynasty at Cordova.*

The cathedral tower should be ascended to appreciate fully the beauty of the situation of this city. The tower is richly decorated with Ionic pilasters, with arabesque designs on the shafts, and niches with circular arches. Though wanting in simplicity the effect at a distance of the tower upon tower, and lantern on the summit, is very imposing. The ascent is easy: an inclined plane, three hundred and twenty paces long, well lighted, and gradually increasing in steepness, leads to the top of the first tower, where there is a gallery, from which the view may be seen, though a high balustrade rather impedes it. A narrow staircase of forty steps conducts to the belfry, and there are seventy steps more to the highest gallery, where indeed the view is magnificent.

On one side, the river Segura winds through a rich plain—the al-Bostan, the garden of the Moors—and soon after passes under the handsome bridge, forming a cascade; the Molinos del Martir, the church and gardens of the Carmen, and a fine

* Mohammedan Dynasties, p. 377.

range of mountains beyond. On the other side, the picturesque village of Monte Aguda, with its Moorish castle, which we passed yesterday, and Orihuela in the distance, and another fine range of mountains, which almost joins the range on the opposite side, the plain between them being bounded by the horizon apparently for only a mile or two.

The foreground to this fine distant view is the city, with its domes and churches, and one of the richest plains in the world, covered with mulberry and various fruit-trees, graceful palms and cypresses occasionally rising above them; and cottages, villages, and churches with their towers, sprinkled amongst the luxuriant foliage.

The city is one mass of houses, so narrow are the streets; but sometimes there are little squares and gardens filled with beautiful palms, orange, lemon trees and cypresses. The various colours of the painted houses, pink and blue predominating, add greatly to their pictorial effect. They had almost all little ladders leading to their flat roofs, which seem to be nearly as much used in Murcia as in the East.

I was delighted with this view, but, in admiring the bright tints and gorgeous Oriental colouring, I could not but confess how much is due to climate. The atmosphere of a Claude makes all his paintings beautiful; and perhaps this view would be less charming, if it were not for the inspiring elasticity of the balmy air and the glorious blue canopy above.

The *façade* of the cathedral is in a churrigueresque style, with Virgins and Saints *ad nauseam*, and a frightful concave or receding centre. A part of the interior is tolerable Gothic, with pointed arches; but what is good can with difficulty be seen. At the entrance, circular arches support a dome, and in the aisles there is a mixture of circular and pointed arches. The cathedral contains few works of art. In the chapel of St. Joseph there is a very good Holy Family, with two Angels. Some call it here a copy of Raphael. The expression of the Madonna resembles Correggio, and is extremely beautiful; but I think it is a Joanes, in the style of the Holy Family in the church of San Andres at Valencia, but not quite so Raphaelesque in style.

The chapel of the Marquis Villafranco is remarkable for its rich stone carvings, in the plateresque style. Over the altar is a tolerable painting; the others were covered. In the chapel of the Corpus Domini there is a good Madonna and Child, and a large painting of the Marriage of Joseph and Mary. It is called a Joanes by Mr. Ford, though here they consider it to be a copy of Raphael. It is not, however, in the best style of Joanes, and I have some doubts of its being by the great Valencian. In the choir there is excellent carving and some paintings, which are tolerable; a Madonna and Child, which is not a bad painting, though not by Murillo, as they say

it is. In the chapel of the Sanctuary is a group in marble, not badly executed, of the Virgin, Child, and St. John; and below, a half-figure of the Devil laying his claws on the Virgin, to the great alarm of St. John. In the sacristia there is some beautiful carving, an excellent bust, and half-figures of angels supporting them, and various Raphaelesques. The silver custodia was not visible, as the keys were not there; but they showed us the silver lamps of the grand altar, which are very large and handsome; and the front of the altar is richly decorated with busts and figures in silver. Close adjoining there is a curious old tomb.

In the church of San Nicolas is a charming little statue in wood of St. Antonio, by Alonso Cano. The Saint is dressed in his Capuchin robe, and nothing can be more mild and simple than the expression of his countenance; the naked child which he bears in his arms is also exquisitely beautiful. It is the Flaxman-like simplicity of this group which is its great charm.

In the chapel of St. Ignatius, in the same church, is a very good group, also carved in wood, of Joseph and the Infant Jesus, by Mala. The child is particularly well done. I observed also a St. Roche, which appears to be by Ribalta.

The streets of Murcia are very narrow, but the Plateria is flagged the whole length, and is regularly built and straight. The effect is very picturesque

of the gay shops, the lofty houses almost meeting, and every window with its balcony. The Calle Mayor is also a good street, but the most picturesque point is near the bridge, where the view is charming of the winding river, the beautiful little promenade of the Glorietta on its banks, the quay, and on the other side the fine range of mountains, and the church of the Carmen and the promenade della Florida Blanca, so called from a statue of the Marquis of that name, who from a low rank raised himself by his talents to the post of Minister to Charles III.; and six years ago this statue was erected to the only great man this Dunciad state ever produced. Travellers may well pay homage to his memory, as, amongst other obligations, Spain is indebted to him for her best roads and most commodious public conveyances. The willows in the garden are pretty, and it abounds in seats.

It happened, fortunately for us, to be Good Friday; and the Murcians excelling all other Spaniards in their fondness for processions, we had an opportunity of seeing the best which is exhibited in the year. At ten o'clock all Murcia was in the streets; crowds of well-dressed, pretty women, many of them tall and stout, and the mantilla, so becoming to all, giving additional charms to those even who did not require its assistance; and still greater numbers of gentlemen—an indifferent, heavy-looking set—all wrapped up in their mantles this hot day, as if it had been

the depth of winter. The people, however, interested me most: the women wore gay handkerchiefs, and gowns of every variety of colour, reaching to very little below their knees; and the men were wrapped up in their blankets of many colours, chiefly red and yellow, with a deep gay fringe of tassels. Their white kilts were somewhat similar, but not so full, as those worn by the Albanians, and their cotton leggings, rude sandals, and often gay handkerchiefs on their heads, were very striking. Dressed in these costumes, and with features frequently as swarthy as an Egyptian's, one can conceive nothing in Europe more like the Moors, and the palm-trees and latticed windows increased the delusion.

The groups they formed were highly picturesque, and not less so were the crowds of beggars with garments scarcely hanging together. For miles round the people have flocked into Murcia to see the great annual function, and truly, for a sight-loving people, it must have been a glorious treat. The procession was headed by a company of soldiers marching in order, and then a number of children dressed in lilac robes, with high pointed caps on their heads, as long as themselves, and jingling bells; these they called Nazarenes, and certainly some who could hardly walk, were Nazarenes "in whom there could be no guile." Others of a larger growth followed, with rich

lace ruffles and cuffs, then a band of music (though not the best in the world), playing a solemn march. Then came a great number of men in long lilac robes, which covered their faces, except their eyes, and reaching to their naked feet, were bound at their waists with thick ropes; these were penitents of all ranks, doomed to this penance during the past year, and certainly not a light one, for each man bore a heavy cross, and glad they seemed to rest it on the ground when the procession stopped. Then came trumpeters; afterwards, a beautiful representation of the Last Supper, figures large as life, and really well executed, carried by two dozen men on a splendidly gilt litter, decorated most beautifully with a profusion of artificial flowers and gilt ears of corn. This was followed by more penitents, bearing crosses, and another band of music. Then came a representation of the scene in the garden, the three Apostles, and the Angel succouring Christ, who was splendidly dressed; this litter was also gorgeously decorated with gilding, flowers, and a real palm-tree with its fruit. Then followed more than two score of penitents, bearing crosses as before, and after them a band of music, and a litter with a group representing the taking of Jesus. Judas kissing Christ, and Peter cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant with his sword. This was carried, like all the others, by a score of men, and was splendidly

adorned with flowers, and in the centre a real olive-tree. Then again came a quantity of penitents, and afterwards a representation of the flagellation, two men scourging our Saviour, and this litter was equally tastefully decorated with flowers. A body of penitents followed, and a band of music, and then a representation of Christ bearing his Cross, cleverly executed. Then an immense number of penitents, and a beautiful image of the Veronica, bearing in her hands a rich veil, on which the head of our Saviour was represented. The platform on which she was carried was most tastefully adorned with flowers, and gilt ears of corn. Then followed a great number of soldiers in armour, with spears, and they went through evolutions, as of spearing, in time to a band, which accompanied them. Afterwards appeared the Crucifixion, nailing Christ to a Cross which lay on the litter, and this was also equally gorgeously and tastefully decorated with flowers, and gold and silver lamps. Then there was a procession of priests, and a few gentlemen, followed by above one hundred penitents, two abreast, as before; and an exquisite image of the Virgin, with her litter most tastefully adorned with flowers and lamps. When this representation appeared, all bowed, and many flung themselves on their knees, and every hat was doffed.

Being engaged in observing minutely the figure of the Virgin, I did not for two or three minutes