On another occasion, when I asked my servant to wake me early, her husband, a miner, who stood by, seeing some prickly plants and thistles which I had just gathered in the Campo lying on my table, said to his wife, "No need to wake the Señor. Put a few of his own thistles in his bed,"—and off he went to bed, shaking his sturdy sides with laughter.

The most curious study of Spanish character was when the lover of Isidra came nightly, his mine-labour ended, to make love to her. The strictness with which the old mother watched every movement of her daughter, the jealous care with which she prevented them from ever speaking a word in private, or being alone for ten minutes together, formed a sadly curious spectacle; for it showed, what is only too true, that the lower class of Spaniard does not seek to implant any moral self-control in her daughter's heart, but merely to fence about her purity with external precautions. The rein is held too tightly, hence the licence when a girl is married, and, therefore, as she says, free.

Poor Isidra! Her Novio's name was drawn in the Quinta for a conscript; and the last time I saw her, she said, with streaming eyes, "He has gone to the North; but I have a letter."

Maria, a somewhat fast young widow, shall form our next short study. She came one morning, a bright, smiling, cleanly-looking little woman, with her only child, Manuéla, and, struck with her nice address and appearance, we engaged her.

Maria certainly boasted the nicest disposition and the most unsatisfactory conduct possible! She was willing and obliging, but always out late at night. If she was in the house at evening, she always had two or

three very gitano-looking men sitting smoking around her. I expostulated mildly. "They are my brothers," or "cousins," she would say. I spoke more severely one afternoon, then repaired to my sofa and darkened room for the siesta; presently, I was awakened by Maria's voice. In her softest accents, she said, "Señor, you had but a poor dinner; I have the best melon in the town; take it, and render thanks to God, as I do."

This affability disarmed me completely; and we decided to give poor Maria a longer chance, as, indeed, we are all bound to do to one another. If we hope for mercy ourselves, why should we be "extreme to mark what is done amiss"?

One day we returned from a long journey, and went to bed tired and exhausted; the heat had been tropical. At one o'clock in the morning my door was fiercely assailed; I sprang up, lit a match, opened the window, and told the assailant, in no gentle language, to be gone. The only answer was a curse and an oath, with fresh blows at the door, and the shouting of our servant's name,—"Maria, Maria! come quickly, come quickly!" Suddenly, to my joy, I heard, at the end of the dimly-lit street, the watchman's cry, "It has struck one-and-a-half—Viva la Republica Democratica Federal." Away, at the sound, went my assailants. Weary and sick I got out my revolver, and laid it ready on the couch beside me, then lit my cigarillo, and waited to see if the ruffian would return. The sereno (night-watchman) passed under the window, and looked at the tiny oil-lamp; then passed along, singing his monotonous song, "Viva la Republica Democratica Federal." I did not stop him: to do so is a serious matter, and lays one open to a charge of timidity or suspicion—the two qualities never to be

shown to a Spaniard. Once let a Spaniard of the lower orders know that you disbelieve his word, or are afraid, or suspect wrong where you are not certain of it, and he will despise you for life.

I sat upon my tiny couch, with candles lit: the sereno's musical cry had died away in the distance—all was still as death. Suddenly, two footsteps came up hastily to my door, and, in one moment, with a heavy block of wood or a hammer, commenced smashing in the lock, cursing poor Maria, who, seeing, I was on the *qui vive*, took good care to be fast asleep.

There was only one thing to be done. Here was I in a strange country, the language of which I could barely speak or understand, in a rough street, with a not very particular population around me. I opened the window, crouched down on the balcony, and gave fair warning—"I have a revolver; I'll fire." The only reply was a curse. I sent one bullet just over the men's heads, with a tremendous shout of "Cometh another." In one minute, before the flattening bullet rang, the two worshippers of Maria rattled, with hasty footsteps, down the street.

On the following night the summons at the door was, to my great surprise, repeated; Maria, too, appeared in "undress uniform" in my bed-room, demanding the key of the front-door to let in the intruder. "Señor, at your peril you refuse; it is the officer of justice come to challenge your shot of last night." I steadfastly refused, and told the officer of justice, if such he was, to come at a respectable hour, and not at midnight. Knowing the unsettled state of the country, I dared not open my doors to a stranger, and, in the morning, the hero appeared. His dignity —and the Spanish official lives for his office—was

offended at the idea of any one firing a pistol on his beat.

Burglary in Spain is almost unknown; of robbery on a small scale there is but little; but seizing and carrying off a man and keeping him until a ransom is paid, or stopping an unguarded train to rob it of the little square deal boxes of dollars, which are on their way to Madrid from the tradesmen and merchants at the different stations on its line of road, are not at all uncommon occurrences. Indeed, the crimes that follow in the wake of high civilization, such as skilful swindling, adroit burglary, robbery, and pocket-picking, are almost unheard of in the interior, as also are the crimes so common in England—such as arson, drunkenness, brutal assaults, and the like.

Purloining a little from the provisions of the master, the swift deed of blood with the knife, accepting a bribe, child-desertion,—but not child-murder, for a casa de espositos is always at hand to receive the foundling,—these are the common stamp of crime here existing.

After this last escapade, Maria and her little girl Manuéla, who pleaded hard to stay, were, of course, necessarily to be got rid of. I gave Maria six hours' notice, and told her she must be gone. I wished her well, but said, "Though I shall say nothing about it, I fear your companions are not a very creditable set." This insinuation her proud Spanish blood resented, and she pleaded so hard, that at last I withdrew the words, and the little couple bundled up their cuatres and their few clothes, and said a courteous Adios.

Of course the above, although a true, is an exceptional case; but it serves to show the freedom, almost amounting to licence, allowed to the servant; and also

brings out another point in the Spanish character in these semi-civilized districts, namely, the Spanish official's overweening pride of his office.

In the interior of Spain, the best servants are the Manchegans, or people of the province of La Mancha. One rarely does wrong in employing a man or woman of this province. The men wear, in winter, a fur cap, something like the old poacher's cap of England, with lappets over the ears; in summer, a coloured handkerchief, tied in knots at the back of the head, dark serge or leather trousers; and a heavy, shapeless coat in winter; in summer, a calico or coarse canvas shirt. The women wear as head-dress a dark silk handkerchief, pinned under the chin, a short, dark-coloured skirt of serge, and a little silk shawl on gala-days, trimmed with bright-coloured embroidery.

The Spanish servants carry a purse. That of the man is a long, narrow purse, of coarse knitting, with one hole; it is wound and tied round the waist within the faja or belt. To get money out of it necessitates the undoing of the faja, which is quite a serious matter. The woman's purse, oftentimes containing the savings of years, is a bag of coarse calico, strapped under her skirt to her waist. The chief store of money, however, is in a purse under the bedclothes. Sometimes it is deposited in a hole in the garden.

Let me tell you a little of the fare of the Spanish servant. In truth, it is very simple. Like their pleasure, so is their fare. As regards drink, water is the staple; but it must be water from the purest, freshest, oftentimes most distant well. This is brought to the door twice a day, and is sold for two farthings the pitcher. Now and then the friend or

brother brings a skin of wine, black wine of Cataluña, or Val-de-Peñas, from the vineyards of La Mancha; but it is little wine that the poor Spanish criada drinks,—she, at least, is quite contented with her everlasting "agua fresca," and she asks no more.

But the wine is cheap enough. If bought wholesale, that is, in a skin or barrel, it would come to little more than twopence-halfpenny per quart; it is, in fact, much like the English beer, and, like it, strengthening. It is greatly used by the wet-nurses in the foundling hospitals, who find that they can suckle upon it without suffering. In fact, the Val-de-Peñas, which is much of the same body as Burgundy, almost takes rank beside the English stout for the support it affords to nursing mothers. The only other drink which the Spanish servant affects is the aguardiente (literally, "burning water"). This is a spirit distilled from these cheap wines, and strongly impregnated with aniseed, which makes it a good pectorate. Every man-servant drinks his copa of this (*i. e.*, wine-glassful) every morning ere his work commences.

As to food, the Spanish servant eats dry bread, with onions or fruit, and every sort of light, savoury fry and soup. To sit down to a good joint is a thing unheard of with them; and certainly they thrive upon their simple fare, and are stronger servants, and harder, more willing workers, than are their fellows in England. The standard dishes are, among the servants, the following:—Gazpacho, that is, lettuce, cucumber, onion, and bread chopped up together, and soaked in a basin of vinegar, oil, and water. Berengenas and beans, that is, the berengena, or egg-plant (*Solanum melongena* of the botanist), a pulpy, oval fruit, of purple colour, fried in oil, with dried beans.

Cocida, mutton or goat's flesh boiled to rags, and served up with garbanzos or peas. Tomates and pimientos fried in oil, with slices of bread. The pimientos are of two kinds, pimiento dulce, or mild capsicum; and pimiento picante, or peppery capsicum. And, as regards soups, there are the sopa de arroz, or rice soup; sopa de tomates, sopa de fideos, or vermicelli soup; and sopa de jamon, or soup of bacon. Very simple, then, is the poor Spanish servant's fare, always eaten out of one dish, the spoons of man or maid servant dipping into it quite mechanically. As to simples, wonderful—and oftentimes not misplaced—is the poor Spanish servant's faith in the herbs that grow around her. For fever, they will give the juice of the orange, with a few grains of magnesia. For the stilling of a crying baby they will not give the poppy-tree, which maddens the brain of the English peasant-child of the Midland Counties, but the berries of the arbutus-tree, if in season, here called "madronios," which have, beyond doubt, a certain soporific power. For colic, or griping, they give rue or a decoction of red sage; for a cut finger they use the barcamina, a sort of ice-plant, to lay upon the wound; for biliousness, a cup of strong coffee, with the juice of two lemons squeezed into it.

The Spaniard of the lower orders has faith enough to believe in this fact, namely, that in every locality, in every climate and land, the Almighty has planted the very herbs which are adapted to cure the special diseases of that locality, or climate, or land. The Spanish Government, to a certain extent recognizing this truth, pays a certain number of herbalists to experimentalize, and collect herbs by flood and field. 'Dioscorides' Herbal' is the text-book of these collectors.

Simple, then, indeed, are the dress, the food, the drink, and the medicines of the Spanish servants. With them, simple as they are, they are most contented, even happy, thriving, and joyous.

And, lastly, in our general picture, let us take a glance at the character of the Spanish servant. Not always quite honest, not always quite truthful, she is yet full of good-nature, and uncomplaining, sympathizing, and gentle. The Spanish servant, male or female, thinks of her master or mistress as a friend, and treats them accordingly, and is ready at all times to do anything for them. The Spanish servant is never tired of getting up from his or her scanty meal to serve you. Give him or her a fair share of freedom, of kindness and courtesy, and they will repay you with all the fervour and affectionateness of their nature.

I shall leave the reader to draw his own contrast between the condition and character of the Spanish and English servant, merely premising that in many points I think we might learn of them. And having presented to you an Isidra and a Maria, I will next offer you the portraiture of an ignorant and superstitious, but most faithful and noble-hearted Manchegan servant, Isabel.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STUDY OF A MANCHEGAN SERVANT—ISABEL.

A SERVANT'S life and character are not usually very full of romance, and Isabel's life and character were very simple. Indeed, their very simplicity, the simplicity of her life, the transparency of her very beautiful character,—a transparency so rarely met with in our world of attrition, and intercourse of bad and good,—chiefly warrant me in making Isabel the study of a separate chapter.

Isabel was an orphan. She dwelt with her widowed mother in Infantes, a small town of La Mancha, perhaps the dullest and most despoblado province in the Peninsula. Its 7,500 square miles contain little more than 220,000 or 230,000 inhabitants. The land, as a rule, consists of dreary steppes, where one wind-swept, arid plain, whose dust is impregnated with saltpetre, succeeds to another. In the summer there is fierce, blazing heat, and scarcely a tree or wood to break off the blazing rays; in the winter the levante, dry and piercing cold, sweeps over the plains. The Manchegan peasantry, however, living in their humble huts of earth or rudely thrown together stones, are among the most affectionate, temperate, honest, and, above all, witty of the Spaniards of the interior. And is not La Mancha the land of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza?

There are bright green tracts, however, as there are in everything that is dreary, even in the steppes of La Mancha. There, are some of the fine olive-groves; there, are the slopes crowned with vines of Burgundy; and every poor peasant, every Manchegan housewife, has, in autumn, her "cueros" (the skins of pig or goat dressed entire, and looking, when filled with wine, very much like the carcase of the animal itself, bloated and shorn of hair) of the Val-de-Peñas, or rough red wine, which maketh glad the heart of the weary. His crisp, salt, sparkling jest—a little rough sometimes, perhaps, a little spice even of the indecent in it, though he does not deem it so—and his glass of rough red wine are the Manchegan peasant's delight. The women are most homely in their habits, most neat in their dress, most thrifty in their housekeeping,—first-rate "hands" at knitting and needlework of every simple kind.

I saw Isabel first bending over the couch of a dying woman, and was struck with the tenderness of expression on her pale, kind, homely face, and the plaintive tones in which she kept on repeating the usual term of pitying affection among the peasantry of the interior, "Pobre! pobre!"

A little instance of this poor servant's homely ideas shall here be given. The dying person, of whom I went to take leave, had just been prematurely confined, in a high fever, of a still-born child. As I left the house, poor Isabel brushed quietly past me, and, to my astonishment, brought the little dead body for me to look at, with the simple words, "She dies; but she must be proud of giving birth to so fine a child: she will be proud, and it will arouse her a minute, to know that the Englishman has admired it!" Such an

incident, of course, is, in all its surroundings, exceedingly painful. Some may say it is "out of place" here; but as this record professes to be a simple, modest, and truthful rendering of Spanish life and character, without any gloss, I think I may be pardoned for inserting this, may I not? Anecdotes such as these seem to me to give a vivid picture of the Spanish poor in all their want of civilization, of polish, and yet in their natural goodness, in the naturalness of their feelings, oftentimes overflowing. Truly, if the Spanish poor have not the blessings, they certainly escape many of the curses of civilization and polish; if they have not the polish of "good manners," they often have the polish that comes from a naturally sweet disposition; if they do offend by their rough, uncultivated ways, they yet possess the interest that attaches to originality of thought, expression, and action. There is no stereotyped "gentleman's servant" in the interior of Spain.

Her poor young mistress died, and Isabel came into our service. In another chapter, the installation of Isabel and her Manuel (she was a married woman) in our casa has been noticed, and the ground need not be again trodden. The pair came, with their rude Manchegan furniture, their alforjas (provision bags), their jarros of Andujar ware, and last, but not least, their image of San Juan—a little dressed-up doll, with outstretched wooden arms, bright rosy cheeks, and dark streaks of paint for his hair, the simple Penates of the Manchegan peasant and his wife.

If countenance be an index of character, as all Spaniards firmly believe is the case, Isabel certainly would be, I thought, a treasure. Her pale, pensive face brightened up whenever Manuel came home, or

any good fortune befell ourselves, with a singularly sweet, gentle smile. Her quiet, plaintive voice, and her neat dress, certainly were better than any written character or testimonial, of which the criada of the interior knows absolutely nothing. Indeed, had we asked for a character, the usual "Bueno, then I go elsewhere," would most probably have been the abrupt end of the matter.

Affection takes the place of calm reason with the peasantry of La Mancha. Isabel soon became, with her rough, witty, stalwart husband, truly attached to us and our lowly home; and no offer of higher wages or a better home would tempt her for a moment to think of leaving us. "No," was her invariable reply; "you have trusted Manuel and me, and been kind to us; where you go, we shall go with you." In sickness and in health, Isabel was like a kind, simple-hearted elder sister more than like a servant. She knew nothing save what her natural goodness of heart taught her—the breathings of that Good Spirit, we are sure, that "bloweth where it listeth"—of the command, "Honour thy father and thy mother," with the promise attached to its performance; yet no one ever treated a mother more loyally, tenderly, and devotedly than Isabel. Whenever Isabel received her wages, it was "one-third for herself, one-third for Manuel, and one-third for 'mi madre' (my mother)." The pair were truly attached to one another, and poor Manuel's sad face, when his wife had the least "angustias," *i. e.*, sickness, was painful to behold. "Tengo muncho sentimiento que Isabel tiene las angustias" (I am deeply affected at Isabel's sufferings). Rough miner of La Mancha, he had the heart of an affectionate child!

She had only been married a few years—she is now thirty-six, and Manuel ten years older—when she came to us, because, though Manuel had long been an admirer and an accepted one, she did not think it right, just after her father's death, to leave the madre in her lone and desolate home. Time, however, softened the madre's, as time alone softens all, sorrow, and Isabel and Manuel became one, settling in our town, near his mining work, some twenty miles from Infantes.

Shortly after she came to us, a black-edged letter came from La Mancha. It was an ill-written scrawl, merely to say that her mother's only sister had just died. Isabel shed a few silent tears, then sat down (for a wonder, she could write a few rude hieroglyphics, a rare accomplishment on the steppes of La Mancha) and wrote a few lines to her aged mother,—not a consolatory epistle, but a few words of helpful assurance; for, as the Spanish and English proverbs both are agreed in, "A little help is worth much pity." This was the substance of the letter, as she herself told us:—"Manuel will be home early to-night. We shall both think of you; but we shall go out and buy you the mourning you will need, so do not be anxious on that score." She came upstairs, and said,—"I am going to take my letter to the correo" (post). Home she came in a few minutes, and first went to San Juan to ask his advice or solicit his prayers; then she went to the "cama," or bed, in the clothes of which lay, carefully secreted, the stocking full of silver, the hoardings of many weary years of work. It was with no niggard hand that her kindly spirit poured out an ample store of dineros, and together, ere supper was tasted, the two went forth into the

dimly-lit streets to buy the simple articles for their mother's mourning. With great joy she showed me her wealth of mourning—a plain black serge dress for the madre, with two black silk handkerchiefs for the head,—this last the regular "mourning attire" of the decent Spanish poor. For herself, she had bought nothing save one handkerchief, of homelier stuff than silk. Isabel expressed herself as very pleased with her little purchases, as she spread them on the bed for our inspection. "But," said she, "when I wake at night I shall think of the still lonelier mother at Infantes."

Many were the acts of courtesy, kindness, and even devotion of this humble sister. How often, in mixing with the lowly Spanish "decent poor," rude and uncultured as they are, is one reminded of the Divine Master's words of truth, "There are last that shall be first."

One night my wife was taken seriously ill, and in the poorer suburb of a Spanish town of the interior help is not easily accessible. Isabel and her lord had gone to bed, but I knocked softly at their door, and the cloud of tobacco-smoke showed me that one, at least, of the pair was awake. In less than five minutes Isabel's pale, sweet face and quiet rap were at the bed-room door, and, to my surprise, in fur-cap, heavy boots, and Manchegan manta, behind her was Manuel. "Now," said he, "we both come to pass the night with you and sit up with the señora: Isabel to nurse, you and I, if occasion be, to go for el medico." Quietly and tenderly as a woman, Manuel went to my wife's bed-side, carefully examined the face, pronounced it as his opinion that it was not "calentura," rolled himself up in his manta, and sat down

opposite to me, close beside Isabel. He only spoke once or twice, and then it was in whispers; and so they watched with me through a part of the weary night.

A Spanish night-watch is dreary indeed. All around you dogs are howling, shut out into the street; the donkeys bray from the back of every house the live-long night; and, as the Spaniards themselves say, "A donkey's bray by night is a doleful bray." The Government of the country has just changed hands, and instead of "Viva la Republica Democratica Federal," as a prelude to singing the hour, the sereno had changed his watch-word to the customary one, "Ave Maria purisima! Las dos menos un cuarto. El se - - - - reno." After this occurrence, I had occasion, one midnight, to go for some article I had forgotten into the little ante-room adjoining the quarters of Manuel and his spouse. In a moment the quick, watchful, anxious ear of Isabel had heard me, and, thinking illness was come again, she called out, "Don Hugo, es la señora mala?" *i. e.*, Is the señora ill again? I heard Manuel give a grunt and shake himself up, and, dreading another midnight invasion, gave the Spanish assurance, "Muy bien, gracias," — the equivalent to our English "All's well."

Not always does one see such tenderness and watchfulness united with high spirit and high sense of right and wrong; but in Isabel's character the two were united.

A Spanish artisan overcharged me grossly for some work done within earshot of Isabel. She came into the room, her eyes alight with indignation, and swept my friend downstairs. "Go; I will come and settle with

you at your master's house." When he had gone, she took the bill and one-third only of the money in question with her, and returned in triumph with the receipted bill.

One more instance of Isabel's affectionate and anxious character, and that side of her character shall be dismissed. One dark night, when the streets were in a disturbed state, I had occasion to go a short distance. Isabel and Manuel were sitting over their fry of garbanzos and lard, each, a huge knife in hand, slicing and eating their cake of coarse bread; by their side stood, or rather lay on the table, a small pigskin bottle —the Scriptural bottle—of Val-de-Peñas, a Christmas present from the widowed mother at Infantes. As I put my hand on the door (I should say, that, in some of the poorer sort of houses in the interior, you must pass through the kitchen to get to the street-door), Isabel jumped up, and, one hand on the lock, the other on my arm, said, "Do not, I beg, go out to-night. We shall not enjoy our supper if you do." Was there not real, deep, unaffected feeling for a fellow-creature's welfare in those simple words of a poor Manchegan peasant?

Isabel was strictly truthful in all her dealings with and words to her employers; but her truthfulness seemed to spring rather from the devotion to kind employers—a trait so constantly illustrated in semi-civilized life—than from high principle. And do we not see, in the devotion of the semi-civilized person to one who is kind, and whom he feels to be his superior in many ways, the germ of a possible devotion to a higher and better Maestro than earth can offer? Indeed, are we not all led up, from devotion to earthly duty to devotion to a duty higher